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ABSTRACT

The document presents teaching methods, content, and learning activities for units in multicultural women's studies for secondary students. The major objective is to help students answer the question, "How much control can a person exercise over her/his own life?" Students learn about the ways women have lived their lives and perceived their choices, and relate this information to their own lives and choices. The document is presented in five chapters. Chapter I, an introduction to the curriculum, discusses origins of the project, rationale, content, and teacher preparation. Chapter II is a unit on socialization and its impact on personal choice. Chapter III, the major part of the document, consists of four topics as well as an essay entitled "Women's Power." Topics cover the traditional, historical, personal, and changing roles of women in Africa (Nigeria), women in China, African-American women, and Chinese-American women in relation to societal influences and economic, political, and personal power. Chapter IV discusses oral history interviewing, while Chapter V deals with students' expectations of themselves in their personal lives. Each of the content chapters include an introduction, educational objectives, readings, teacher notes, teacher background material, and various learning activities interspersed throughout the text. Activities include reading, film viewing, listing, comparing, discussing, and interviewing. An annotated bibliography of books and audiovisual materials for students concludes each chapter. (CK)

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SOURCES OF STRENGTH: WOMEN AND CULTURE

A Teacher's Guide

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MAY 1 1980

Note to Workshop Leader:

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We dedicate this work to
our mothers and grandmothers

Acknowledgments

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During the conceptual development of Sources of Strength, we used feedback and ideas from several consultants. Susan Groves, Coordinator of the Women's Studies Program and Title IX Coordinator, Berkeley Unified School District, was one of the authors of the proposal for Sources of Strength, and gave us continued support and input as a feminist, a teacher, a politically astute administrator, and a developer of instructional materials. She responded to each unit of our curriculum at each stage of development. She worked with the field test teachers, and made available the resources of the Women's Studies Program. We value her contributions to our work.

Barbara Christian, professor of Afro-American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, worked closely with us on the development of the overviews on African-American Women and Women in Nigeria. She critiqued the content and structure of the overviews and recommended books and articles for students and teachers. Her help and support were invaluable.

Linda Wing, director of the Asian American Bilingual Center, Berkeley Unified School District, met with us at the beginning of our work on the units on Chinese-American Women and Women in China. She gave feedback on the content and structure of both first and revised drafts of the units, and recommended student and teacher resources. Colombe Yates, curriculum coordinator with the Oakland Public Schools, also gave us guidance and ideas in the early conceptualization of the units on African-American Women and Women in Nigeria. Teresa Wong, a teacher and curriculum developer with the Berkeley Unified School District, critiqued our early drafts of the units on Chinese-American Women and Women in China. Genny Lim, a San Francisco writer and teacher, read and gave feedback on the revised version of the unit on Chinese-American women.

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There were two field tests of *Sources of Strength*. We would like to give credit and thanks here to the field test teachers and their schools for the time and effort they spent and the resulting information they gave us about the materials. The first field test took place in the winter of 1976; four teachers in three schools in the San Francisco Bay Area agreed to teach each unit of the curriculum as part of courses they were already teaching, and give us feedback on the lessons and resource readings and information.

Phyllis Koppelman taught the Cultural Comparisons unit in her Women's History class at Berkeley High School (Berkeley Unified School District, Berkeley, California) during October through January. Because she was teaching from a rough preliminary version, Ms. Koppelman put in innumerable hours planning, refining and adding to the Teacher's Guide; she met with us frequently to give her responses and student responses to the materials.

Sandra Jackson taught one section of the Cultural Comparisons unit, Women in China, in her Language Arts class at Oakland Technical High School (Oakland Public Schools, Oakland, California). Two teachers field tested units of *Sources of Strength* in their U.S. History classes at Mt. Diablo High School (Mt. Diablo Unified School District, Concord, California): Robert Johnson taught the Personal Lives unit, and Susan Shaffer taught Oral History Interviewing. Each of these teachers allowed us to observe in the classroom and met with us to give feedback about the lessons they taught.

Six teachers worked with us during a second field test in the Spring of 1977, teaching *Sources of Strength* for the entire semester. Cheryl Bright and Kathy Dennis taught the curriculum for English credit at Argus High School (Ceres Unified School District, Ceres, California). Carol Kerman taught it in Sociology at Concordia High School (Oakland, California). Ron Quick initiated the teaching of the curriculum in World Culture at William C. Overfelt High School (San Jose Unified School District, San Jose, California); Chris Bailey, working with him as a student teacher, took over instruction at the second week and continued until the end of the semester. Marilee Stark incorporated the curriculum into her Women's Studies class at Tamalpais High School (Tamalpais Union High School District, Larkspur, California).

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INTRODUCTION

Origins

The idea for Sources of Strength: Women and Culture grew out of the professional and personal experiences of three people. Each had been working in women's studies for several years, and had arrived from different directions at the same point: a desire to explore her cultural roots, learn about others' cultural roots, and try to understand the interaction of social, historical, cultural and personal expectations on the lives of women.

Gloria Golden's contribution to the creation of Sources of Strength grew out of her combined experience in educational research, anthropology and filmmaking. She was the initiator in 1972 of a series of films for teacher education on sex-role stereotyping in schools -- an effort which marked the United States Office of Education's first formal project on this topic. This work encompassed both a description of the problem of sexism in schools and strategies for changing stereotypic attitudes and behavior. In conjunction with Lisa Hunter, who played a major role in the project, Golden also co-authored a handbook for teachers on sex bias in schools.

From 1972 to 1976, in leading workshops on school sexism and studying the anthropology of women, Golden began to see that high school students could learn a great deal from the perspectives of women in different cultures. She believed it important for young women to become aware of the active role they can take in charting their own lives, and for students of both sexes to understand the separate, yet interacting, influences of culture, history and personal choice.

These points came home to her in a personal way when she traveled east in the fall of 1975, determined to learn more about the life of her 90-year-old grandmother. In three intense sessions, she recorded pieces of a remarkable story. As an 11-year-old orphan in possession of a single trans-oceanic ticket, Tillie Lapidus Krochmal somehow persuaded Lithuanian authorities to let both her and her older brother emigrate; as a young woman in this country, she managed in hard times to feed herself, her husband and seven children on 75¢ a day. Both grandmother and granddaughter received more from this interaction than they had counted on. For the grandmother, there were confrontations with her own courage and strength; for the granddaughter, there was the emergence of ideas now embodied in Sources of Strength.

Susan Groves, one of the authors of the proposal for this curriculum, lobbied for and helped create the first Women's Studies Program in a public school district in the country. It is still one of the few district programs of its kind. In her seven years as coordinator of this program she has been responsible for the development of teacher training techniques and multicultural feminist curriculums at all grade levels. Some units she developed with teachers and consultants include Asian Women in America and Black Women Poets. Most recently, curriculums have been developed and integrated into the teaching of Ethnic Studies (Black, Asian, Chicano) in the 4th-6th grades.

Working to expand the outreach of the Women's Studies Program, Groves instituted a course in multicultural women's history at the high school level. It was this history course that provided the basic evidence of need for this curriculum for high school students; it also became one of the field test classes for Sources of Strength; many of the ideas in the curriculum were tested and revised as a result of student response and teacher input in this class.

Lisa Hunter's professional experience and her personal commitment to the concepts and goals of the curriculum involved her with Gloria Golden and Susan Groves in developing the project proposal. She worked with Golden for three years developing teacher education materials -- films and guides -- on sexism in schools. She spent another year leading workshops that described the issues of sex discrimination in education and provided guidelines for developing bias-free activities and materials. Conversations with the teachers, parents, students and administrators in these workshops indicated a great need for high school materials that provided information about women in various cultures. Some of these workshops were led together with Golden and Groves; Hunter was enthusiastic about working with them again to conceptualize the curriculum developed in the grant application to the Women's Educational Equity Act Program.

Hunter was eager to design the kind of course she wished she had had in school, a course that would offer students tools for learning to ask questions about and explore alternatives for their futures, and for taking credit for their own strengths and uniqueness. Growing up without successful female role models and with little guidance in examining future life alternatives, Hunter never aspired to move beyond secretarial work to the creative professional positions she now holds. A curriculum such as Sources of Strength would have helped her to consider taking control of planning her future sooner than she did.

Her interest in oral history grew from a resolve to learn and write her mother's history by interviewing the people who had known her. Without that record, her mother's life and therefore some of her own history would eventually be lost. She was struck by the potential of the Oral History Interviewing section for opening up communication between two or three generations (student/mother's generation/grandmother's generation) and for giving students information about their own historical origins.

Rationale

The primary question which motivates Sources of Strength is HOW MUCH CONTROL CAN A PERSON EXERCISE OVER HER/HIS LIFE? This question is a mind-boggler -- whether it is asked today or 300 years ago -- to which there cannot be a single uniform answer. The answer depends on who you are and in what cultural and historical circumstances you grew up. We believe that it is crucial for every individual to attempt to answer this question for herself or himself. Although this inquiry may not produce changes in one's life, a sense of the difference between taking an active and a passive role in the direction of one's own life is likely to result.

Sources of Strength is a flexibly structured curriculum designed to help the secondary school student determine her/his own answer to the question posed above. Though the content focus is on women, the issues and activities evoke the enthusiasm and interest of both sexes. In the school context, both sexes have had far less curricular exposure to the social influences on and personal experiences of females than of males. Some members of both sexes are eager to fill that information gap.

Briefly, the rationale for the structure of the curriculum is this. To learn effectively about the ways women have lived their lives and perceived their choices, and to relate this information to one's own life and choices, one needs to do the following:

1. contact women (from one's own as well as from others' cultures), through a combination of autobiographical writing, documentary films, and personal interviews;

2. read, think, talk and write about the cultural beliefs, social institutions, historical events and personal actions which affected the lives of individual women, in order to distinguish between decisions which were largely within a woman's control and those that were not;

3. reflect on one's own projected life plans and try to decide which expectations are chiefly of one's own design and which are established by others; and

4. speculate on the opportunities and obstacles -- historical, cultural or personal -- that one might encounter in the

future in order to have some advance ideas about what can or cannot be controlled.

Let us make clear that we believe each life to be a mixture of freedoms and constraints. Occasionally the movement to eradicate sex role stereotyping promotes the impression that because they have discovered new options, the "liberated" woman and the "liberated" man now have complete control over their destinies. As though only our forebears were bound by cultural role definitions and historical circumstances. We believe that the answer to "How much control can I exercise over my life?" is dependent on both context (more control in these circumstances and less control in those) and perceptions (more control when I am aware of both the limits and the latitude of my choices).

The latitude of choice is greater now than it has ever been in the past, but we are still influenced by context: we can no more control the culture, the family, the historical era into which we are born than could our grandmothers or great-grandmothers. But we have, today, chances to make decisions that would be not only beyond the awareness of our grandmothers' time, but which would possibly run counter to the beliefs of their cultures. To a far greater extent than has been true in past decades, young women today make decisions about marriage, childbearing, work and travel.

You may protest that these choices have always been there; after all, choices exist only in people's heads. Yet we have found that most often it was the extraordinary, and not the ordinary woman, who bypassed or trespassed prescribed boundaries. Her uniqueness perhaps came from an unusual parent, an exceptionally willful personality, uncommon educational opportunities. Our first main point in Sources of Strength, therefore, is this:

Today, each young woman has the chance to be extraordinary in that she can stand back and examine her options, experiment with them, expand them, define them, redefine them. A second, but equally important point follows:

It will enhance us to learn about and talk to the women in our own and other cultures and families, to find out the limitations and opportunities they experienced, the choices they perceived and the choices they actually made, and to compare these choices and decisions with their own. In contacting our mothers and grandmothers, we also learn their strength and their pain. This gives us not only a closer bond to them but also tells us about the potential to experience that we hold within ourselves.

It is difficult to stand back and examine and evaluate one's choices at any age -- but it is most especially difficult in one's middle teens. To do so, the student needs intelligent support, warm encouragement, clear curricular objectives and concrete, focused activities. Sources of Strength, in league with teachers who choose to use it, attempts to provide this. Specifically, the goals of the curriculum are these:

- To understand that one can exercise active control over one's own occupational and lifestyle choices.
- To understand the degree to which women in the past and today possess political, economic and personal power.
- To be able to distinguish among cultural, historical and personal factors which affect decisions in the lives of older women, and among cultural, historical and personal factors which currently affect one's own life.
- To become familiar with women in one's and others' cultures -- their experiences, their values, the obstacles they face, the dreams they have.
- To become aware of the diversity of cultures that exist within this country, and the diversity of sex-role definitions that exist within and among these cultures.
- To be able to recognize ethnic and sexual stereotypes, and describe possible economic and personal consequences specific stereotypes could have on one's own future.
- To be able to make rudimentary projections about the key decisions one will face in planning one's future, and in doing so, be able to distinguish between one's own and others' expectations for oneself.

Description of the Curriculum

The curriculum of Sources of Strength has four units: 1) Socialization, in which students are introduced to this central concept of the curriculum; 2) Cultural Comparisons, in which the students use autobiographical readings and documentary films to learn about the lives of women in diverse cultures; 3) Oral History Interviewing, in which the students learn interviewing techniques, conduct in-depth interviews of women they know, and share their experience as well as the interviews with one another; and 4) Personal Lives, in which students concentrate on their own decision-making, on distinguishing between personally and socially determined expectations for their own lives and on identifying the values underlying their expectations and decisions.

Probably the most satisfying way to present the curriculum is to teach all four sections in the sequence in which they have been mentioned here, as follows:

1. Socialization (1 week):* Students examine socialization in two spheres.

2. Cultural Comparisons (10-12 weeks): Students learn cultural and historical background.

3. Oral History Interviewing (3-4 weeks): Students interview women in their family or community.

4. Personal Lives (3 weeks): Students apply concepts and information from Cultural Comparisions and Oral History Interviewing to their own projected decisions.

The curriculum has its own inner logic, moving from macrocosm to microcosm, from the lives of women in books to the lives of women known to the reader. Nevertheless, the question which is central to the curriculum -- "How much control can a person exercise over her/his life?" -- is asked in each section.

In addition to the activities of the three main sections, Sources of Strength includes a well-researched, annotated bibliography which contains recommended student reading selections and films as well as references to resources to supplement the teacher's own knowledge on the cultures and issues in the curriculum. The teacher can select materials from the bibliography which best suit the interests of the students for any given activity.

Finally, as a reference and resource for both the teacher and the student, the curriculum includes a concise but sufficiently thorough historical/cultural overview for each culture studied in Cultural Comparisons. We have limited the number of overviews to four: Women in China, Women in Africa (Nigeria), Chinese-American women and African-American women.** The structure of the overview may be used as a model for teachers, curriculum specialists, students, etc. who want to create resource overviews on women in other cultures.

The curriculum can span a one-semester or two-semester period, depending on the number of cultures chosen for study by the teacher and students, the amount of reading and the number of activities the teacher incorporates. For example, in the first five to six weeks of the Cultural Comparisons unit, the students may compare Chinese-American women and African-American women. Since the cultures are rich and exciting, and the activities and bibliographic selections provide numerous and varied options, the Cultural Comparisons section could easily be expanded by the teacher to an 18-week semester. Cultural Comparisons could be followed in the next semester by the Oral History Interviewing and Personal Lives sections, since both of these could also be easily expanded beyond the seven weeks designated if the whole curriculum were taught in one semester. Sources of Strength is appropriate for use in history, career education, sociology, language arts and related curriculums.

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* These time estimates are based on a one-semester presentation of Sources of Strength; however, this section alone can be expanded to one semester; the Guide indicates how this can be done.

** Throughout this manual, China refers only to mainland China. It should also be noted that Nigeria is one of many countries on the African continent.

What to Anticipate

The teacher and students who have used Sources of Strength have found that initially it is hard work. Making cultural comparisons is mind-stretching, and one is never quite the same after the experience. One of the best ways to learn what is culturally controlled and what is personally determined is to study the variations in human experience. It is this study which has provided the mental energy for the whole field of anthropology over the last 100 years. And, if you have picked up this curriculum as a candidate for use in your classroom, it is likely that you are already aware that this kind of curiosity can be quite catching.

Teaching and studying the curriculum is like traveling in a country one has never been to before. One has to get acquainted, in a fairly short time, with a different culture, a different set of shared experiences, a different pattern of power relationships. These are things one has to do. Beyond that, there is what one wants to do: to suspend judgment and not think in terms of good or bad, right or wrong; to see life through the eyes of these new others. At first, the experience of newness and the effort at seeing are mentally unsettling. One wants to retreat to the safe and familiar, to one's own cultural patterns. But as this period passes, one begins to feel that sense of power that comes of realizing that something has been learned that was not known before.

The urge to retreat to the familiar is worked with in Sources of Strength by making comparisons between what is familiar and what is new. Thus in Cultural Comparisons, for example, students look at similarities and differences in the experiences of Chinese-American and African-American women. If the student is of one of these cultural groups, s/he will often be comparing the other culture to her/his own. If the student is of a culture other than African-American or Chinese-American, s/he will compare new information from both cultures to her/himself.

Because of the difficulty of working with new information, we have found that in the beginning Sources of Strength seems to move very slowly. But suddenly, somewhere in the third week, it begins to take off and both teacher and students are filled with excitement, new insights and questions; they feel on the road to an expanded perspective about women, about cultural diversity and about themselves.

Summary of Content

Socialization: Students are introduced to the concept of socialization, a theme that runs throughout the curriculum. Students examine socialization agents -- history texts and families -- in two activities.

Cultural Comparisons: Using autobiographical readings and films, students will engage in three activities, called Digging, Personal Expectations and Changes. Before launching these activities, the teacher will use the overview information to help students become familiar with the historical and cultural background of the two cultures to be compared. With the overview information that is communicated by the teacher, students can gain the context needed to understand the forces influencing the decisions of the women they read about in the autobiographical excerpts.

Digging. The Digging activity is designed to help students develop a picture of the kind and degrees of power women exercised in political, economic and personal activities. This activity combines a wide variety of exercises including large group discussions, small group work, individual writing assignments and imaginative tasks designed to build inquiry skills. For example, the main instruction in the Digging activity is:

> If you were on an archaeological expedition and the only written record that remained of the culture you were studying was the reading you just did, what would you know about the degree of political, economic and personal power exercised by women within the family and the society?

Digging is carried out over a several-day period for each culture being studied, after which the students contrast the evidence they've gathered for the cultures.

Personal Expectations. Moving from the societal level to the personal level, students focus in Personal Expectations on the lives of the individual women who appear in their work readings.

As part of this activity, each student interviews a woman from her/his family or community. They ask her what she expected to do with her life when she was of high school age, and what, if any, changes have occurred in these expectations. This interviewing experience provides the students an advance taste of the in-depth interviewing that will take place in the Oral History Interviewing unit. Again, throughout the activity, students will contrast the lives of the women from the cultures being studied with lives of the women who were interviewed.

Changes. In Changes, the third activity, students examine the recent changes which may have occurred in the lives of women -- both on the societal and personal level, as well as the continuities with the past. In doing this, students will also examine changes which have occurred for the societies as a whole. Both films and readings are used in this activity.

The overview for each culture studied contains a section on Continuity and Change. This information enables the teacher to assist the students in comparing women's former and present circumstances, and in tracing the developments which led to changes. Since some of the inquiries contained in Digging and Personal Expectations are reiterated, students now have an opportunity to integrate the concepts and information recently learned in those activities. The same process is repeated with the next culture(s) studied -- presentation of overview information, Digging, Personal Expectations and Changes.

Depending on the time available and the needs and interests of the students, teachers may want to intersperse the activities of Cultural Comparisons (and for that matter the activities throughout Sources of Strength) with additional spontaneous activities. For example, if students have just seen a television program or film that related to what is being studied, it might be advantageous to take time to explore these connections. Or, if students have observations about the changes in their own perspectives that are occurring because of involvement in the curriculum, it might be useful to discuss these changes. Certainly, in a history or social studies course, a teacher could effectively devote one semester to the study of four cultures, using the Cultural Comparisons framework. The semester time period would also allow more time for additional activities along the lines just mentioned.

Oral History Interviewing: The Oral History Interviewing unit of Sources of Strength will move from the lives of women in autobiographical accounts and fiction, to the lives of women known personally by students. The goals of this section are for students to become aware of the diversity of life experiences of women in their communities, to look at the expectations these women had for themselves and how those expectations may have changed throughout their lives, and to identify what influenced their decisions and actions.

Oral History Interviewing is estimated to take four weeks to teach; it is divided into the following sections:

Defining Oral History. Students are introduced to filmed, taped or written examples of oral histories; the teacher selects these from a list of recommended resources. Students also define the role of the interviewer during this introduction.

Preparing for the Interview. Students learn and practice interviewing techniques, write questions for their interview, and plan for an interview with an older woman in their family or community.

Conducting the Interview. Students conduct the interview that they rehearse with each other, decide which method to use to report on their interview, and transcribe it in the way they have decided.

Analyzing an Oral History Interview. In this section students analyze readings and their interview to identify the decision points in women's lives and to identify influences on their expectations and decisions.

Reporting on Oral History Interviews. Students report on their interviews and see that there is a diversity among women in their community.

Personal Lives: Personal Lives is the final unit of the curriculum, and provides students with a framework with which to relate the information they have worked with during the semester to their own lives. Personal Lives is planned for three weeks, and is divided into the following sections:

Changing. Students describe themselves at 10 years of age in order to see that the changes that occur over time are due to events that are both in and out of their control.

Expectations. Students compare the expectations of women in films or books with what actually happened in their lives to examine the effects of unforeseen events on one's goals.

Looking Ahead. Students describe what they think their lives will be like 5 years ahead, and compare their projections with statistics on marriage and employment; they use the combination of their projections and the statistics to assess the amount of control it is possible to have over their lives.

Preparation for Teaching

The first time around, Sources of Strength will involve considerable preparation on your part. Here are the steps we recommend:

1. Give the Guide a close reading. As you read, it might be helpful to jot down notes in the margin about which parts you anticipate will be easy or hard, exciting or uninteresting for the students and for you. You will need enough lead time to select appropriate readings from the annotated bibliography, to order materials and to become thoroughly familiar with the Guide's information on the cultures to be studied.

2. Decide whether you will teach one, two or all of the units (Cultural Comparisons, Oral History Interviewing, Personal Lives) and determine how many class weeks you will devote to teaching each.

3. If you are going to teach Cultural Comparisons, decide which cultures you will study.

4. For each unit you will teach, select the readings and films which you think will work best with your students. To do this, read the annotations provided in the Guide and make an initial selection of those which seem appropriate. If possible, before actually ordering or copying the readings you will use, first locate the books in local print and audio-visual libraries or collections, and read or view these choices in entirety. When you have made your final reading selections, consult the "Getting Ready for Class" section of the bibliography for specific procedures.

5. Preparing for Cultural Comparisons. When you first leafed through the Guide you might have wondered at the fairly extensive amount of information provided on each culture. It seemed to us that the best way to minimize your time of preparation would be to provide enough information to answer the questions that might occur to you about how women's roles developed in a specific society, as well as about that society's pivotal beliefs and key historical occurrences. We also wanted to save you the extra time it might take to do this kind of research on your own. But in case you do want to explore specific points further before teaching, or while teaching, Cultural Comparisons, useful references are provided in the Teacher Background Materials sections of the Bibliography.

   Probably the most important single piece of preparation you can do for Sources of Strength is to become comfortable with the overview background information. On the basis of our experience in the field testing of Cultural Comparisons, we have made decisions as to which pieces of background information from the overview are most likely to provide meaningful focus for the students, and we have indicated this in the focus questions which precede each section of each overview. We think this will greatly simplify your planning and teaching task. The field testing of this curriculum also taught us a great deal about the information and concepts students might find difficult and problematic. The Guide anticipates these possible occurrences in the Teacher's Notes, and suggests strategies which have been effective in these situations. Naturally, students of different abilities and interests will differ in their responses to the curriculum. In anticipating difficulties, we have tried to be aware of this range of responses.

Finally, we suggest that for the Cultural Comparisons section, as for the other sections, you try to put yourself in the place of the student as you do the readings; become familiar with the activities and think about the concepts and information. It has helped us to constantly keep this question in mind: "What is startling or new to me about this information, this concept, this experience?" Asking this has made it easier for us to understand what the students are experiencing.

6. Preparation for Oral History Interviewing. If at all possible, it will be helpful if you conduct an oral history interview of your own prior to teaching this unit. In doing so you will experience the major activity of this unit, and it is likely this will heighten your enjoyment and ease in teaching it. Also, we recommend that in choosing the readings and film for the first week of this unit, you take some time to answer the questions in the activities designed to prepare the students for the role of the interviewer.

7. Preparation for Personal Lives. Again, the most effective preparation technique we can suggest is that you do most student activities yourself while you are selecting and doing the reading the student will do. This type of preparation is particularly important in Personal Lives in light of the sensitive issues involved in discovering the distinctions between one's own expectations for one's self and other's expectations for one's self. This will make it easier for you to appreciate which topics students will feel more comfortable talking about in pairs, in small groups, or with the whole class, which topics they are more likely to speak freely about in writing seen only by you, and those they will write in the private journals they will keep during the three-week unit. Most important, by reviewing some of

the conflicts you perhaps once felt in regard to decision-making and personal expectations, or may even sometimes still feel, you will be able to teach this unit from a position of strength. That is, by having surveyed your own decision-making territory, even in a cursory fashion, your energy will be freed to help the students look at their decisions.

Personal Lives is the unit which many of us may wish we had had in high school, so you may experience some envy in realizing the students are getting from you and the curriculum now what you wish you had gotten then. It is also a unit which for some students involves contacting some internal discomfort evoked by the differences they begin to perceive in personal, familial, and societal perceptions of what is right for them as individuals. The greatest asset you can bring to the unit is your understanding that growth may occur between the lines, in the silences ... even in students' resistance to beginning to explore their present and future decisions.

8. In all three units there are specific student activities suggested; some involve the entire class, some are designed for small groups and some for individual work. All of these activities can and should be modified as necessary for the particular needs of your class. Throughout the Background Overviews are student activities, concepts to define, and comparison questions; select, expand, modify these in whatever ways you feel are appropriate for your students. We also suggest adding spontaneous activities to reinforce the issues being studied.

Values

The question of point of view and values has come up repeatedly during the development and field testing of Sources of Strength. It is difficult for anyone to study a culture different from their own without judging it from their own perspective and set of values. We emphasize the need in this curriculum to look at a culture through the eyes of the people, particularly the women, who live in it, through the autobiographical readings or films. This quote from Carolyn Niethammer sums up our position:

> Many of the customs we will look at here are very different from those of modern Western culture. [We] have attempted to present the facts in a fairly straightforward manner, refraining as much as possible from

> judgment, though surely there are places where [our] politics must glare from between the lines. [We] ask readers to remember with [us] that any woman, living or dead, can be judged properly only by the way she conforms to the ethical and social standards of her people, not by the measure of our own ethical or social standards.*

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*Carolyn Niethammer, Daughters of the Earth (New York: Macmillan, 1977).

SOCIALIZATION

Introduction

The impact of socialization on the degree of choice men and women may exercise is a theme throughout Sources of Strength. As an introduction to the curriculum, students should achieve a beginning understanding of the meaning of gender-role socialization.

In the very simplest terms, socialization is society's means of letting its members know how it wants them to behave in infancy, childhood and adulthood. Another definition of socialization is found in the textbook, Through African Eyes (New York: Praeger, 1971).

> The total process of learning how to behave is called socialization; it is society's means of perpetuating its values. Since values vary from society to society, so do the details of socialization, but the process of socialization is universal.

Socialization is neither good nor bad, it is simply a process -- one that occurs in every culture. By studying this process, we may gain some understanding of the values of any given society, what it considers to be right and wrong. Nevertheless, we may also view the behaviors into which a person is socialized as positive or negative, depending upon what we view as healthy for the survival of a society and its members.

There are numerous ways in which socialization occurs. The behavior of each of us is determined -- to a greater or lesser degree -- by others' expectations. Young people may receive messages about how they should behave from their families, from institutions such as the school or the church, from the media and from their friends. The most insistent messages received concern what kinds of attitudes and behaviors are appropriate for males and for females -- sex-role or gender-role socialization.

Although socialization is highly useful in terms of daily functioning and interacting, it also limits the amount of choice an individual exercises at any given moment. This question -- how much control does a person have over her/his life -- is examined throughout Sources of Strength.

Activities

In the following activities, students will look at two socialization agents: history text books as an aspect of the educational curriculum where sex roles are learned, and the family as a setting where sex roles are learned.

History textbooks as a socialization agent. The objectives for this activity are for students to:

(1) identify what value history textbooks give to women;

(2) identify the imbalance of information about women compared to information about men;

(3) compare the coverage of non-white women and men;

(4) identify the messages textbooks give us about the appropriate roles of women and men.

Give each student, or pair of students, a U.S. history or world history text (which should be available from your history department or the school or local library). Ask students to think of and write down the names of two women who they think should be mentioned in the history book. The woman can be living or dead; one should be from their own ethnic group, and one from an ethnic group other than their own.

Discussion

- How many could not think of a woman from your own culture?
- How many could not think of a woman from another culture?
- How many could not find the women you thought of in the index?

Ask students who found their women in the index to look up what is written about them and read it to the class. Or, ask them to tell the class the amount of detail given, the context, the accuracy, and the tone of the information. (Is she listed by her first and last name or as the wife of somebody? Is she treated as comic relief, or as someone who has made a serious contribution to history? etc.)

Have students then scan quickly through the text as a whole, looking for: (1) the number of times women are mentioned (including in pictures) in relation to the number of times men are mentioned, and (2) the number of times women from non-white cultures are included (in U.S. history texts).

- Why was it hard to think of a woman, or to find her listed in the index?
- What messages are you getting about who is considered important by the authors of the history book (consider both sex and ethnicity)?
- How is the history book an agent of socialization?

Use the statistics on the following page if you want to give more information to students about history textbooks.

Information About U.S. History Textbooks

- The typical U.S. history text devotes 1 out of every 500-800 pages to women.
- The ratio of photographs and illustrations picturing women compared to those picturing men is 1 to 17.
- Non-white women are almost completely left out; in a study of 36 textbooks currently in use in the United States, there was no mention of Chicanas, Native American, Puerto Rican or Asian women. Where Black history is included, there is almost no mention of Black women, with the exception of Harriet Tubman.
- Where women are mentioned, they are often set off in a special section, on different color paper, or included as comic relief.

Phyllis Arlow and Merle Froschl, Women in the high school curriculum: a review of high school U.S. history and English literature texts (Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1975).

- There is no mention of the development of birth control, or of women's work, or of her part in the early labor movement; little detail is given to women's wartime activities.
- Little attention is paid to traditional realms of women's accomplishments: art, theater, dance.

Janice Trecker, "Women in the U.S. History High School Textbooks," Social Education (March 1971).

Percent of sentences about individuals of different racial groups:

	1965	1971
White	95.2%	93.2%
Asian	3.0%	2.2%
Black	0.3%	2.8%
Native American	1.5%	1.8%

"While only 2.8 percent of all sentences about individuals in the 1971 study were concerned with Blacks, this was an increase of 2.5 percent. The increase for women was 1.1 percent."

Roger Zimmerman, article in the Negro Educational Review, 1975.

The family as a socialization agent. The objectives of this activity are for students to:

(1) *identify childhood socialization experiences within families which convey to girls and boys skills and attitudes considered appropriate for their sex, and*

(2) *recognize similarities and differences in the socialization practices of cultures.*

Explain to the class that the family is a primary and powerful agent of sex role socialization. The term family suggests many alternatives, such as the nuclear family (mother, father and children) or the extended family (grandparents and perhaps great-grandparents). Family can also be a network of related persons such as clans where, for example, a mother's brother may act in many ways like a father to his sister's children. Family can also mean the single parent.

Assign the reading excerpts, or read them out loud. These are excerpts from chapters on the socialization of girls. The first is by a French anthropologist writing on the Fulani, a west African tribe. The second is by an American anthropologist looking at life in rural Taiwan. The excerpts were chosen because they are remarkably comparable in content; both describe how girls are expected to behave and how they learn what is expected of them, and both to some extent contrast the treatment of girls with that of boys.

Ask students to keep these questions in mind as they read:

> How are messages about what is correct behavior for a girl communicated to the girl? That is, who communicates the messages to her?
>
> Are the messages direct or indirect?
>
> What experiences does she have that teach her, perhaps gently, perhaps harshly, what is correct?

If the students receive xeroxed or mimeographed copies of the readings, tell them to put a checkmark beside each sentence (or several sentences) in which such messages are communicated. For example, in Wolf's article, the student could mark the sentence, "...a mother will severely scold or even beat a four-year-old girl who does something that endangers her small brother." Or in Dupire's article, the student might mark: "At a very early age a little girl begins playing games which are direct imitation of the work done by women."

Discussion

Have the students answer the question given as the focus for the reading assignment:

- How are the messages about what is correct behavior for the girl communicated to her?

As they give their answers, write them on the board in this chart:

	Fulani WoDaaBe	Rural Taiwan
What is the message?		
Who conveys the message?		
Activity by adult, other children, or girl herself that conveys the message		

- What are the similarities and differences in the socialization of girls in the two cultures shown by the chart? Were there more differences or more similarities in the ways the girls in these two cultures were socialized?

- Were there socialization messages and experiences that the children in the readings experienced that were similar to what you experienced as a child? Give some examples.

From Marguerite Dupire, "The Position of Women in a Pastoral Society (The Fulani WoDaaBe, Nomads of Niger)," in Paulme, ed., Women of tropical Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 54-56.

At a very early age a little girl begins playing games which are a direct imitation of the work done by women. She joins in some games with her brothers -- mostly games entailing some form of physical exercise, such as leap-frog, chasing each other over the sand, making miniature wells in the gulbi during the winter season -- but she leaves them to "play at herds" while she models small pots or carries around on her back a doll made from a narrow-necked gourd or simply consisting of a stool, until soon the doll will be exchanged for her own small brother. As soon as she can stand up straight, she is put in the middle of a circle of women dancers, and the old women clap their hands and admire her for being so grown-up if her chubby little body manages to keep in time with the rhythm while she maintains a precarious balance. By three or four she is already quite a coquette, admires herself in a pool or turns round to watch her shadow when her hair is done in the style worn by the older girls; and she becomes skillful, like her mother, at polishing up her metal bracelets by rubbing them with sand. At two or three, the lobes of her ears are pierced, six holes in the right ear and seven in the left. The rings which are placed in them are scarcely more than a centimeter in diameter and allow for her becoming progressively accustomed to wearing ever heavier rings, which will not, however, replace the previous one until the holes have become large enough.

The stages in the upbringing of a little girl, unlike that of a boy, continue smoothly without a break. While a boy receives a profound emotional shock at about the age of six, a girl has no such experience until she is married at fourteen or fifteen. By slow degrees her play activities become the tasks it will be her duty to perform. At six or seven she begins fetching water from the well, on foot, or perched on a donkey; or stick in hand she helps to keep the beasts in order that are brought her to be watered. Under the guidance and supervision of her mother, she pounds grain, weaves winnowing-fans and mats, decorates and mends calabashes, sews, until these activities gradually become the tasks that have to be done. And just as she becomes aware, at a very tender age, of her responsibilities as an elder sister by carrying a small brother on her back, looking after him and defending him, so she also learns to look after the house in her mother's absence.

When children are four or five years old, a beginning is made to teach them the essential rules of the sociomoral code, the mbo Dangaku. Thus a little girl learns, among other things, that sexual play between brothers and sisters is forbidden, that she must never look her fiancé (for she is already betrothed) in the face nor go to visit him, nor even mention the name of her future parents-in-law, and that respect must be shown to all old people. Her elders show her, by force of example, in which circumstances she is expected to display modesty of behaviour and in which others she is free to behave as she likes.

Nor is her mental education neglected. It is given to her by her mother, who answers all her questions, gives her practical training in the use of customary equipment, and teaches her how to count by means of notches cut on a bed-pole.

During these short childhood years spent in the paternal camp, the little girl learns to fill the two essential roles which her family expect of her: that of daughter and that of sister. Her relationship with her father is much less spontaneous and less affectionate than that with her mother. She actually sees very little of him, but she knows that she owes him absolute obedience. It is he, together with her mother, who has chosen a husband for her, often at the time of her birth, and she is not allowed to have any opinion in the matter. However, in practice, the father is not any more tyrannical towards her than he is towards his sons, and as often as not one is struck by his weakness and his difficulty in making his children obey him. Either at the naming ceremony, or just before his daughter goes to live with her husband, the father will present her with at least one heifer from his herd. Later he will avoid close physical contact with her, and once she is married, he cannot enter her house without a feeling of shame. But this attitude of restraint will be compensated for by the interest, affection and generosity he will display for his grandchildren, which are indirectly intended for her.

The relationship between mother and daughter does not undergo these changes during the course of the years. The mother always remains her daughter's counsellor, especially during the first years of her marriage and at the time of her first confinement. A daughter may want to let her mother have one of her own daughters as a household help, either as soon as the child is born, if it is the first girl to be born, or later when the mother is getting too old to manage all the household tasks by herself. However, once the children are married, a mother relies more on her sons than on her daughters, and this is certainly one of the reasons why a woman desires so much to have sons.

From Margery Wolf, "Little Girls," Women and the family in rural Taiwan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 65-67.

Taiwanese parents assume that children cannot really "understand" until they are around six years old. They claim that until then they do not try to teach them anything and expect little in the way of obedience. At the most they hope the preschool child will not injure herself or cause her parents too much trouble. Obviously even such a low level of expectation requires some socialization on the parents' part, and actually a good deal of training goes on before a child enters school. It is here that the difference in training given boys and girls begins to emerge, particularly for little girls who have younger siblings. It is not unusual for a four-year-old girl to be put in charge of her two-year-old brother, though the mother will insist that both stay within her hearing range. Parents may think they do not "expect" obedience of preschool children, but a mother will severely scold or even beat a four-year-old girl who does something that endangers her small brother. At first a little girl learns which games she dares play with little brother on her back simply by finding out which one she does not get scolded or slapped for playing, but it does not take long for a child of average intelligence to figure out the hazards of various games. Thus, by the time a girl is of school age she has had much more responsibility training than her male counterpart. She has also learned the pain that follows disobedience, and a few of the ways to avoid that pain.

Beyond learning a few chores and some of the behavior that pleases adults, such as obedience, a preschool Taiwanese girl learns her first subtle lessons about the second-class status of her sex. She has heard from the time she could understand words that she was a "worthless girl," though the tone of voice may often have been consoling. The older she gets, however, the more often she will be involved in incidents like this one, culled from our child observations. Wan-iu: (a four-year-old girl) was sitting on a small stool near the well. A neighbor came out and said, "Wan-iu:, let Thiam-hok (a two-and-a-half-year-old boy) sit on your stool so he won't get dirty." Wan-iu: pushed him away and said, "No, you can't have my stool. Get away." Wan-iu:'s mother shouted at her angrily, "You are a girl! Give him that stool. I'll beat you to death!" Wan-iu: looked unhappy but gave up the stool. This little girl had no brothers, or she probably would never have gotten into this kind of trouble. By age five most little girls have learned to step aside automatically for boys, at least when their parents are watching. Little girls who have younger siblings of either sex have explored many techniques for fulfilling their responsibilities to their parents' satisfaction and still joining in the village play groups. Threatening or hitting little brother when he wants to do something other than hang around big sister's playmates is early discovered to be a technique that will result in quick and often painful punishment. A favorite parental ploy is to promise young children a special treat of food or an outing to get them to run an errand or do a chore. Even the parents admit they rarely fulfill these promises, claiming that the children forget about them anyway. This seems to be one of the first successful techniques that little girls imitate. We have heard many a four- or five-year-old girl solemnly promising to take her two-year-old brother on a trip to Taipei if he will just sit quietly through one more turn in the jump rope contest.

Whether or not the age at which parents expect their children to suddenly become obedient, responsible, and helpful, and the age at which they first attend school are anything other than coincident is moot. In the past this was the age at which girls gave up their freedom of movement by having their feet bound. The demands made on modern children of both sexes at this age, both in the harsh environment of the school and at home, are immense, and for lack of any initiation are probably more traumatic for boys than for girls. Little girls who have been caring for a younger brother or sister for a year or two have already discovered the price of disobedience. More important, they have become sensitive to subtleties like tone of voice and setting that indicate which commands require immediate obedience, which can be delayed, and which can be ignored. Their male peers must learn these lessons in a very brief period, and to make matters worse, they are taught both by a demanding teacher (in a foreign language) and by an unexpectedly demanding parent. Little boys whose disobedience was a source of amusement or at most brought a laughing swat suddenly find themselves hit with a ruler for not sitting down when told to. Fathers who used to be affectionate become distant, with a tendency to lecture. Taiwanese parents believe that if they are "friends" to their children they will not be able to "teach" them. When their sons reach the age of "reason," fathers must withdraw to become dignified disciplinarians.

CULTURAL COMPARISONS

Introduction

Purpose

For students, the fundamental purpose of this unit of Sources of Strength is to learn what the lives of women of different generations in various cultures have been like. What were the conditions -- cultural, historical and personal -- that governed their lives? What degree of personal, economic and political power did they exercise? Did they feel constricted or supported by the society and family in which they lived as children and adults? Have they wanted to make changes that would make their lives happier? Or have they been basically content? Have the societal changes that occurred over time made their lives happier? Did they participate in effecting these changes?

Key Issues

These are intricate and even exhausting questions. But they are among some of the questions which emerge when studying the diverse historical and cultural contexts of women's lives and reading their autobiographical statements. But these issues are not the only important uses of this curriculum. In fact, we are somewhat less concerned with the conditions that caused oppression than with the conditions in which women have effected significant changes in the options open to them. Through the materials and activities in this section, we hope to deal chiefly with these questions:

- What choices have women perceived they have?
- What power did they achieve, given their choices?
- If they have changed their perceptions of choice, what cultural factors or historical events, if any, influenced them to see their lives differently?
- What personal events influenced them to see their lives differently?
- What struggles, either personal or social, did they endure in their decisions to change their life possibilities?

Organization of the Cultural Comparisons Unit

The Cultural Comparisons unit is divided into overviews, student readings and activities.

Overviews. There are four overviews: Women in Africa (Nigeria), Women in China, African-American Women and Chinese-American Women. Each overview is divided into a section on the lives of women in the traditional culture and a section on the major changes and continuities over time for women in that culture. Overview information is focused on the degree of political, economic and personal power women had and have in their culture both traditionally and today. Influences behind changes in the culture and in women's roles and power are also described in each overview.*

The overviews also contain Concepts to Define, Teacher's Notes, Discussion Questions, Student Activities and Comparisons which you may pursue at any time as you present the overview information to students.

Preceding the overviews is an essay, "Women's Power," that explicates our definitions of political, economic and personal power.

Student Readings. There are annotated student reading selections at the end of each overview section. They are usually first-person accounts, so that the women being studied may speak for themselves about their lives and culture. It is very important for students to try to see each period and culture through the eyes of people living in it, rather than from a 20th century Western position. Each selection has been chosen to illustrate concepts covered in the overviews.

Activities. There are three basic activities that are used in Cultural Comparisons: Digging, Personal Expectations, and Changes. The same three activities are used with each overview and accompanying student readings. It is by doing these activities that students will begin to be able to answer the central questions of Cultural Comparisons: to what degree do women possess political, economic and personal power? what has changed in women's roles and degree of power over time and what has remained the same? what are the influences behind the changes that have occurred? and how much control do women exercise over their personal lives?

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*Change may occur very differently in different cultures. Certainly not all changes in the conditions of women's lives -- whether the changes be in Third World or Western countries -- can be easily evaluated as positive. In the United States, for example, women have entered the work force in increasing numbers since the end of the 19th century, yet housekeeping is still the main occupation of American women. (Robert Smuts, Women and Work in America, New York: Schocken Books, 1971, p. 36.) We are not dogmatic about how and when positive changes in the conditions of women's lives have occurred or should occur, and are aware that there is not and never will be one way for cultures and individuals to define women's roles. We are simply in favor of situations in which women have the option of choosing to live their lives as they want -- and the information and societal support they need to exercise that option.

Teaching Cultural Comparisons

Based on feedback from teachers who taught Sources of Strength in a variety of ways during its development, we make the following recommendations for teaching.

Choosing the Cultures. Unless you devote a whole semester to Cultural Comparisons, you won't be able to teach all four cultures for which we have written overviews. The ideal number of cultures to work with is two. If you study only one culture, be sure to ask students to compare aspects of it with their own lives, and spend some time on the Comparison notes within the overview. (No matter how many cultures you study, students usually automatically compare with their own culture or with what they perceive as the dominant "American" culture.)

When you have decided which culture you will begin with, select the homework readings you feel are most suited to your class and assign them right away. Students will therefore be reading a first-person account at the same time they are hearing information about the general position of women in that culture.

Using the Essay "Women's Power." This essay gives examples of how political, economic and personal power are defined and used within the curriculum. Have students do the activity at the beginning of the essay, and then read some of the quotes used to describe the three kinds of power. Students should read the essay before the presentation of overview information begins.

At this point it isn't important (or even possible) for students to learn the definitions of power; they should get a general feeling, a broad framework for what they will be looking for in the overview information and the student readings.

Using the Overviews. Read through the overview and decide how much and which parts of it you want to present to the class. DON'T TRY TO COVER ALL THE INFORMATION IN THE OVERVIEW! In our experience, students were overwhelmed and tuned out when too much information was given to them in a short span of time. Read through the overview, and select what you feel will most give students an understanding of the traditional and changed political, economic and personal power of women.

It is most effective to present the information verbally so that students can ask questions and discuss their responses to it right away. A less desirable method is to select sections of the overview you want to cover and duplicate them for students to read. Although we have written the overviews in an informal style, they are nevertheless directed to the teacher.

At the beginning of each overview is a list of concepts to define. Ask students to define the concepts for homework, or look them up in class when you come to the term in your presentation of information.

There are also focus questions which precede each section of political, economic and personal power. If you write these on the board so students can see them as you are presenting information on the culture, they can use the questions to organize and prioritize the information.

Another way of organizing the information for students as you present it is to write on the board the overview section headings as an outline; or you could ditto these off and give them to students for review.

During your presentation of overview information, stop and discuss, compare, or do some of the activities embedded in the overviews. How much of this you do will depend on the time you have, the interest of your students and how well you feel they are understanding and absorbing the information.

Selecting the Readings. A selected list of readings follows each overview and supplements the information of that overview. Each selection is annotated; we strongly recommend that you read any selection you plan to assign, since the reading level varies, and you will need to be familiar with them for the activities.

Where selections are brief, you may find it possible to xerox or mimeograph readings. For each culture there are one or two books which contain a number of selection suggestions. Perhaps students could share materials from the library or you could purchase some books. Collecting and xeroxing the readings is a time consuming task.

Select and assign the readings before you present the overview information. Students should be encouraged to begin reading at once to allow them to place the overview information in an immediate context. Also, throughout the overviews there are references to these readings.

The readings are a mixture of oral histories, autobiographies, biographies and fiction. Please try to include an autobiographical or first-person selection from each overview period if you can. Each student should read at least two short selections or one long one for each culture. Most selections are short to allow students to read and work with more than one. In some cases you may want to assign a full novel. These, too, are listed and annotated.

Doing the Activities. Read the lesson plans for Digging, Personal Expectations and Changes. Try them out yourself, and adapt them if necessary for your students and your teaching style.

Students should do the Digging activity when you've covered information on the traditional section of the first culture you're studying; then present information on the second culture, and "dig" again. Follow this digging with a comparison of the two cultures, and then have students do the Personal

Expectations activity. Do the Changes activity after each overview section on Continuity and Change; then compare the changes and continuities in the two cultures.

If you are studying three or four cultures, move on to the next overview(s) when students have finished comparing changes and continuities, and follow the same sequence: traditional overview and readings, Digging activity, comparison, Continuity and Change overview, Changes activity, comparison. Students probably won't want to repeat the Personal Expectations activity, since it is an interview.

We have found that it takes students several class periods to feel comfortable with Digging, since it takes time to become clear about the differences among political, economic and personal power. Students who are not used to analyzing readings have found it easier to complete the Digging chart together as a class before they analyze on their own.

Following is an outline for our suggested sequence for Cultural Comparisons.

SUGGESTED SEQUENCE FOR CULTURAL COMPARISONS

- Select cultures
- Discuss "Women's Power" essay

Traditional Section

- Assign readings, first culture
- Present selected overview information, first culture
- Digging activity, first culture
- Assign readings, second culture
- Present selected overview information, second culture
- Assign Personal Expectations interview
- Digging activity, second culture
- Compare cultures
- Personal Expectations activity

Continuity and Change Section

- Assign readings or select film, first culture
- Present selected overview information, first culture
- Changes activity
- Assign readings or select film, second culture
- Present selected overview information, second culture
- Changes activity
- Compare continuities and changes in both cultures

Repeat the sequence for additional cultures studied.

Activities

We suggest the following sequence and components for teaching Cultural Comparisons so that students fully explore the meaning of power and internal/external influences on the lives and roles of women in the cultures they study. The activities that are described within the overviews are not outlined here; they will further enrich students' understanding of the concepts in this unit.

1. Power

   Before you begin to talk about women in the cultures you're going to study, students will need some information about the focus they'll be using in this unit. Use the activity at the beginning of the "Women's Power" essay before you start to discuss women in traditional cultures.

2. Readings

   Assign readings to students for the traditional section of the first culture you will study. (Recommended readings are annotated at the end of each overview as well as in the "Student Learning Materials" section of the Bibliography.)

3. Traditional Overview, First Culture

   Present to students background information from the traditional overview of women in the first culture you have chosen to study. Students should read at least two short selections or one long one for each culture.

4. Digging

   This activity contributes to the building of critical thinking skills and helps students identify the social structure which is the framework in which women's roles are set. The objective is for students to:

   > *describe, on the basis of evidence in their readings, the political, economic and personal power or influence exercised by women within the family and the society in the cultures studied.*

   Plan to spend several class periods doing this activity.

   A reading selection for traditional Africa and one for traditional China are printed on pages 39-42 (Africa) and page 45 (China). We have analyzed each reading in a different way; these analyses are printed after the readings.

You can use these readings and analyses for your own preparation, and/or have the class do them together for practice before they "dig" into their own reading selections.

Introduce the activity:

> *If you were on an archaeological expedition and the only written record that remained for the culture you were studying was the reading you just did, what would you know about the degree of political, economic and personal power exercised by women within the family and the society?*

Remind students of the definitions for political, economic and personal power in the essay "Women's Power."

> Political: Is the woman a decision-maker in the family or community? If yes, do her decisions affect major or minor matters?
>
> Economic: Does the woman grow food, produce or trade goods, or do work from which she earns a wage? Does she have any say in how the goods she produces or money she earns is used?
>
> Personal: Does she have control over the use of her body, the use of her time, the persons to whom she relates? Can she decide whether or not to have children? Can she decide what kind of work she wants to do? Can she decide whom she wants to marry?

Probably no single reading will have evidence for all three kinds of power.

There are two ways for students to "dig." One is to list only examples of power in columns; the other is to decide the degree of power on a continuum of 0 to 10. The second method gives students a chance to list examples of lack of power as well as possession of power. Blank charts appear on the next two pages; you can copy them on the chalkboard or ditto them off to hand out.

DIGGING CHART

Name of Culture ______________________________

Name of Reading Selection ______________________________

List examples from the reading that show evidence of political, economic or personal power of women.

POLITICAL	ECONOMIC	PERSONAL

DIGGING CHART

Name of Culture ______________________ Name of reading selection ________________

List examples from the reading that show the degree of political, economic and personal power the woman or women have. 0 shows no power and 10 shows total power.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

PERSONAL

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

ECONOMIC

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

POLITICAL

READING FOR WOMEN IN AFRICA (NIGERIA): TRADITIONAL

Paraphrased from "The Magic Water Pot," by Iris Andreski[*]

Iris Andreski went to Eastern Nigeria in 1968 to assist her husband in a survey of the effects of rapid urbanization on the agricultural people of that region. While there, she decided to ask the oldest women of the Ibibio tribe to tell her their life-histories because they were born before the impact of European colonization and civilization began to change the life patterns of Africans.

Andreski recorded this history from a woman who was about 66 years old. Although her husband was still alive, she lived, together with her goats, in a small house in the compound of one of her sons. Although her children provided her with modern clothes, she preferred to be naked when she was in her house and wore only a simple cloth tied at her shoulder when she went out.

Andreski: I am very pleased that you are letting me spend this time with you. May we begin by your recalling the happiest time in your life?

Woman: The happiest time in my life was when I was about 10 years old. I left my parents' compound and went to live with my sister, who was married. Then I lived a care-free life and all I knew was that I could eat food any time I desired. Even if there was only a little food in the house, I knew that my sister would see that everybody ate. During that time I did not know that to marry a husband was not a simple thing -- that to be a housewife in Ibibio land was a life full of responsibilities. That a housewife does not get money for food from their husbands but rather that we feed them with the little money we get from farming.

Andreski: When did this happy life of your childhood end?

Woman: Let's see. Well, I stayed with my sister who was married for five years before she became a mother. After she was pregnant for two months she went into the fattening room, as it was then the custom. We were all surprised when, after she had stayed there for 6 months, she became seriously ill and died in the fattening room. Then I had to leave and went back home to my parents' compound.

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[*] In Old wives' tales: life stories of African women (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), pp. 85-89.

Andreski: Didn't I hear that you married your late sister's husband?

Woman: That is true. He paid a heavy bride price for my sister and then she died without even leaving him a child! My parents were sorry about that and called my sister's husband and asked him to choose another girl in the family in place of his late wife. At first he didn't want to, but my parents knew that he had great rank as a good trader at that time, so they begged him to take me. Later he accepted. This took place while I was 11 or 12. I got pregnant immediately.

Andreski: This seems young to have a child.

Woman: Oh, that was not my problem with this husband. Apparently he practiced powerful juju (black magic) on his wives and in fact my life became in danger.

Andreski: You mean, you feel he actually tried to kill you? What happened? How did you find out?

Woman: I didn't exactly find this out. Rather, others told me. This is what happened. Every day my job was to bring water home in a certain pot. It was the same pot and the same job my sister had done. I soon found out that the days I forgot to fill this pot I would get sick and would not get well until I remembered to fill the pot with water. I began to see that there was some sort of magic in that pot and I asked others who were older than I about it. They became alarmed and told me to divorce my husband immediately because he was the sort of person who used juju on his wives -- in fact, five of them had died already and people in this village were afraid to give their daughters to him as wives because of this.

Andreski: I can see that this information would have scared you. What did you do then?

Woman: Of course I did divorce him, just as soon as I gave birth to my first son.

Andreski: By giving your husband a son, could you say that you had satisfied the conditions of the bride price this man had paid for your sister?

Woman: Yes. The bride price in a way bought a child.

Andreski: You must have been relieved to be rid of this man.

Woman: Not at all. In fact the days that followed were the unhappiest days of my life. We had never quarreled, you see. And, after I returned to my parents I thought that I would not marry again in my life. I was very depressed.

Andreski: But I see that you did marry again.

Woman: (Laughing) Oh, yes, almost immediately. I worked fast and started negotiating with him soon after the divorce so I was only home with my parents for three months.

Andreski: And has this marriage turned out well?

Woman: I am content. I gave my husband many children and at present I cannot be maltreated by him as long as my children are living.

Andreski: How many children do you have?

Woman: I have three male children and six females. There were 13 altogether, but four died. Unfortunately, too, some of my daughters married into wicked families and as a result many of their children died.

Andreski: You believe, then, that when something terrible happens, like the death of a child, someone has caused it?

Woman: Oh yes. It may be an evil spirit living inside the person, of course.

Andreski: I asked you earlier about your second marriage. I would like some more information, if you don't mind. For example, what was your life like when you lived with this husband?

Woman: Ah, well, you see I was in a very fortunate position there. I was the senior wife and my three co-wives had to give me respect. Also, we all got along very well. We did everything in common and were kind to one another. We could even go into each other's huts and borrow things without the other one caring.

Andreski: I understand that it is important to get along with your co-wives -- perhaps more important than with your husband. But, were you never, say, jealous of each other?

Woman: Of course, where more than one woman marries a man there is always jealousy between them. But in our case there was not as much and, if I may brag a little, it was because of me.

Andreski: How is this so?

Woman: Well, as senior wife I, of course, advised my husband. I always insisted that he share anything among his wives in order of their seniority. For example, with dresses. I arranged with him to suit every wife so that none of us might complain that hers is inferior to another's.

Andreski: So being married into a polygamous family worked well for you?

Woman: It did for me. But I must say that I would be very happy if any of my daughters owned her husband alone. There are disadvantages to a husband with many wives. Especially if she is a junior wife, she has no control over her husband. Anything she gets from him has to be discussed with the senior wife. Also, it is harder for the husband to make ends meet. And the husband shares his love among the other wives.

Andreski: A final thing I want to ask you about is your work. How have you supported yourself?

Woman: I do not do handmade crafts. When I was a girl I sold crawfish for my mother. When I married, I did farming and small trading. When my children grew up they told me not to worry about myself so much in doing my trading. So they have been giving me some money for my food.

Andreski: You are living alone here. Are you happy doing that?

Woman: Living here is where I like it best. If I did not I would not live here. Luckily I have children so my interest will never stray from this compound, my son's compound, again. I do miss my agegroup friends, though. They have all died so now I have no friends outside of my family. I remember that my grandmother was the kindest of all to me. But since she died, no one has been as kind.

Andreski: Thank you for spending this time with me. I wish you well.

DIGGING CHART

Name of Culture *Traditional Africa*

Name of Reading Selection *"Magic Water Pot," (Old Wives' Tales)*

List examples from the reading that show evidence of political, economic or personal power of women.

POLITICAL	ECONOMIC	PERSONAL
- Mentions agegroup friends--as a group they would have had some degree of power. *- Supervised co-wives in second marriage.*	*- Sister in charge of food growing and preparation.* *- She gets her own money from farming and trading.* *- She shares work and possessions with co-wives.* *- She has indirect power from economic support given by children.*	*- Wore loose clothing (freedom of movement.)* *- Carefree life as a child.* *- Fattening ceremony (could be seen by us as either power--because young women got status from it--or lack of power, because it was bad for health).* *- She could get a divorce and remarry.* *- Agegroup friends and co-wives gave her companionship.* *- When she was old she could choose where she wanted to live.* *- She got indirect power in that she could not be mistreated by her husband as long as her children were living.*

Note: The entries in this chart represent the thoughts of the authors of Sources of Strength. Other people will certainly have additional and different interpretations of the reading.

After students have "dug" together as a class, they could work individually or in small groups to fill out the Digging Chart(s) for the selections they read.

Ask one person from each group to report on the examples of power the group found in each category. After each group reports, ask students for which categories they needed more evidence.

5. Readings

   Assign readings to students for the traditional section of the second culture you will study.

6. Traditional Overview, Second Culture

   Present background information from the traditional overview of women in the second culture you will study. Students should read at least two short selections or one long one for each culture.

7. Assign Personal Expectations interview (see page 42).

8. Digging

   Ask students to dig for evidence of political, economic and personal power in the reading(s) they've selected for the second culture.

   An excerpt from one of the readings on traditional China and a sample Digging Chart are printed on the next pages.

CHIA YING-LAN, THE ONE WHO WAS SOLD, AGED 53*

I am from Hengshan hsien. Li Hai-yuan's wife, Chia Fu-lan, is my sister. Ours was a poor family, and when I was sixteen I was married off to a pedlar and tinker, who took me with him to Hopeh. He began smoking opium and stopped working his land and so he lost it. He began going round the villages mending cooking vessels. He was often away for long times at a stretch.

I looked after our house in Wuan Hsien. I don't know what he paid for his opium, but I got less and less from him and in the end I was getting nothing at all. As I did not want myself and our daughter to starve to death, I took a place with a farmer called Sung. He was a medium-sized farmer with his own land. I worked there for four months. I had no pay, but food for myself and my daughter.

When I was twenty-two I was sold. (Weeps.) He came one day and fetched me and my daughter and took us to a slave dealer called Yang. (Weeps.) My husband sold us so as to get money for opium. I never saw him after that. Some years ago I was told that he was dead. When I had been two days with Yang, the slave dealer, he sold me. He sold me and my daughter for 220 silver dollars to a farmer called He Nung-kung.

I was very unhappy. Mr. He was an old man. He was twenty-three years older than I was. We did not love each other. But he was kind. I wasn't ill-treated there, neither by him nor by his family. Actually, he was a nice old man. (Weeps.) He had his own household and did not live with his family. I bore him a son, so everyone was kind to me.

Then he fell ill and died. I was thirty-five then. I had a daughter and a son. One child by either marriage. (Weeps.) He Nung-kung died on 29 April according to the moon calendar. That was during the war. It was 1944. (Weeps.) In January the following year, I gave birth to a daughter. She died when she was seven. (Weeps.) I was pregnant when Mr. He died, so they had not been able to marry me off again immediately.

I was, of course, a widow and a burden on the village. The landlord wanted to marry me off. My husband's relatives, that is Mr. He's relatives, wanted to marry me off, too, in order to get the house and my children. There was a man in the village who was willing to buy me. I don't know how they arranged it, and I don't know who he was. But I didn't want to any longer. I just wanted to be with my children. (Weeps.) In order to get out of this new marriage, I lied and said that I was already forty-one. Then he thought that I would not be fertile any more and wouldn't have me. That was what I had reckoned on. After that I was left in peace.

---

*In Jan Myrdal, Report from a Chinese village (New York: Vintage, 1972), pp. 203-204.

DIGGING CHART

Name of Culture *Traditional China* Name of reading selection *Chia Ying-Lan*

List examples from the reading that show the degree of political, economic and personal power the woman or women have. 0 shows no power and 10 shows total power.

	PERSONAL	ECONOMIC	POLITICAL
0	*"I was married off..." Husband sold her and her daughter. Sold again by slave dealer.*	*Got no money from husband.*	*No political power evident.*
1			
2			
3	*Son gave her indirect power--people were kind to her.*		
4	*Indirect power: because she was pregnant, was not married off again.*		
5			
6		*Worked for food and board.*	
7			
8	*Lied and got out of new marriage.*		
9			
10			

Note: The ratings on this chart are subjective and comparative on the part of the authors of Sources of Strength; the ratings should not be seen as absolute.

9. Comparison

After you've presented information on two traditional cultures and students have dug for evidence of women's power in their readings, spend some time comparing the cultures.

Ask students to think of as many ways as they can in which the two cultures were alike and different. Make two columns on the board: Differences and Similarities. Conduct a discussion comparing first the differences and then the similarities between the roles and circumstances of women in, for example, China and Africa. Write the students' responses on the board in the two columns. If you feel they have missed any major category -- political, economic, personal -- point this out towards the end of this part of the exercise. Conclude with this question: What strikes you as the most outstanding similarity and the most outstanding difference between the two cultures and their histories?

10. Personal Expectations

In "Digging," students learned how to generate questions to determine and describe the position of women in a society. In "Personal Expectations," students will consider what individual women expected of themselves.

The objectives for this activity are for students to:

(1) Identify expectations of women whom students know--expectations they had when they were adolescents as to how they would live their lives: the kind of work they would do, whether they would marry, whether they would have children, whether they would remain in the community where they were born or live elsewhere; and

(2) Recognize various factors which contributed to changes in these expectations as the women grew older.

This activity consists of an interview by each student of a woman they know. Give this assignment to students several days ahead of time -- sometime during the second overview or Digging activity. This is the assignment:

> Ask a woman in your family (grandmother, mother, older sister, aunt, sister-in-law) or a neighbor (older friend, relative of a friend, a woman who works in a local business) two questions:
>
> - When you were in high school, did you expect to be doing in your life what you are doing now?

Since this question is a broad one, you may wish to make it more specific on the basis of your knowledge of your relative or friend. For example, you could ask:

- When you were my age, did you expect to be married or single now?
- OR, When you were my age, did you expect to be working? Doing this kind of work?

Then ask:

- What do you think caused you to be doing something different from what you expected (or what do you think caused you to reach your goals or expectations)?

Plan on spending about 45 minutes in conversation with the person you have decided to interview. It would be a good idea to choose someone with whom you feel you would be comfortable talking.

When you ask the woman if she is willing to be interviewed, explain you will be using her response as part of an activity for a course in school, and find out if she wishes to be anonymous.

After talking to the woman, write notes on what she said so that you can report to the class (about four days from the day the assignment is given). If you feel the need to take notes during the interview and you think it won't make the person you're interviewing uncomfortable, jot down some key words to remind you later what was said.

It will probably take several class periods for students to share the results of their interviews -- depending on how much detail you ask them to give.

You can focus -- and shorten -- the discussion by asking students to report in the following way:

	Expectations	Actual	What Caused Difference
a. Kind of work			
b. Marriage or relationships			
c. Children			
d. Where she lives			
e. Leisure time			

Have students spend some time asking each other or discussing with the whole class the following question: Do you think that the person you interviewed made choices based chiefly on her own preferences or chiefly on what her family or society expected of her?

11. Readings

Assign readings to students, or select a film, for the Continuity and Change section of the first culture you're working with.

12. Continuity and Change Overview, First Culture

Present background information from the Continuity and Change overview of women in the first culture you're studying.

13. Changes

The objectives of this activity are for students to:

(1) Describe changes -- either positive or negative -- which have occurred in the societal position of the women in the culture. Consider the political and economic power of women in the society, and

(2) Describe changes -- either positive or negative -- which individual women in the culture have personally experienced. Consider the number and quality of options open to them in activities, persons they can relate to, places they can live in or travel to or visit. Consider the degree of satisfaction they gain from their lives.

If a film is viewed:

A. Tell students to use their information about life in traditional Africa or their reading of the life experiences of women as a basis for comparison with women in the film.

B. Write Political, Economic and Personal on the board and tell students they are going to use these categories to look for changes in the lives of the women in Malawi.

C. As each category is discussed, you might read again the definitions in the essay "Women's Power."

Political:	Is the woman a decision-maker in the family or community? If yes, do her decisions affect major or minor matters?
Economic:	Does she grow food, produce or trade goods, work for a wage? Does she have any say in how the goods she produces or money she earns is used?
Personal:	How many options are open to her in her use of time, her activities, persons she can relate to, places she can live in, travel or visit? Does she have control over the use of her body? Can she decide whom to marry? Can she decide whether or not to have children? Can she choose the kind of work she wants? What degree of satisfaction does she get out of her life?

D. Examine one woman at a time looking for indications of change.

SAMPLE LESSON FOR CHANGES USING THE FILM

Malawi: The Women*

	POLITICAL	ECONOMIC	PERSONAL
Village Woman:	Nothing directly said. Men not around, so possibly many decisions are made by women.	Women work at many things. Build houses together (possibly a real change). Some modern equipment seen (bicycles). Men work in cities/ mines.	Monogamous marriages. Dissatisfaction over men not being there (negative change).
Small Town Woman:	In family, no change. "It's a man's decision where we live."	Has small garden, but not large enough. In village, had a large plot. Has to buy food in market; food expensive and of lower quality (negative change). Husband has good job, economically well-off (positive change).	Life easier: has machine to grind her corn, takes classes in sewing, etc. at community center (positive change). Prefers village life; friends there. Children look down on village life. Doesn't see husband enough, works too hard (negative change).
City Woman:	Nothing said.	She is a secretary. "If you like job and work hard, you can get ahead." Seems well-off.	Lives with grandmother on her estate. "I'm independent. Most women my age are married. I could be too, but it's a matter of finding the right man" (possible positive change). Uses bus as transportation, but it takes too long.

---

* Los Angeles: Churchill Films, 1971.

If a reading is done:

A. Ask students to work in small groups according to the reading they selected on change. If the whole class read the same selection, have them divide into groups of 5-6. As a group, ask them to look through their selection and mark, or write on a piece of paper, every indication they can find of changes in (1) how society views the woman, and (2) how she views herself. For societal change, remind them to consider the political, economic and personal power of women. For personal change, students may consider the number and quality of options open to the woman, persons she can relate to, places she can live in or travel to or visit, and the degree of satisfaction she gains from her life. Point out that change can be negative as well as positive.

B. Have the groups report the examples of change they found and list them on the board under the headings Political, Economic and Personal.

C. Ask the class to assess the degree of satisfaction each woman they read about derives from her life.

An alternative discussion focus is to ask students to look for these things in their reading(s):

A. Indications of ways one woman in their reading has control over her life. Does this indicate changes?

B. Indications of ways one woman from their readings was not able to exercise much control. Does this indicate changes?

C. If she did not have much control, what was one major cultural, historical or personal factor which contributed to this situation?

D. Ask the class if they can assess the degree of satisfaction any of the women they read about derived from her life.

14. Readings

Assign readings to students, or select a film, for the Continuity and Change section of the second culture you're working with.

15. Continuity and Change Overview, Second Culture

Present background information from the Continuity and Change Overview in the second culture you're studying.

16. Changes

Do the Changes activity that is outlined in #13 for either the film or the readings.

17. Comparison

Compare continuities and changes in the two cultures you've been working with. We recommend spending several class periods in discussing the similarities and differences of economic, political and personal power of women in the two cultures. A chart comparing the major changes in China and Africa is printed on pages 55-60; use this as a guide for creating your own chart if you're comparing cultures other than China and Africa.

The comparison list we have prepared is long and detailed. The students, of course, do not have to discover every comparison but they should find some examples of differences and similarities for each of the three spheres of power.

A. Refer to the differences and similarities between the cultures you have studied as you present the information on Continuity and Change.

B. In comparing China and Africa (or two other cultures outside the United States), include a third column labelled "U.S." and have students discuss the situation in the United States, as they perceive it, for each item.

C. One class who used this unit divided themselves into four groups. One group made a chart which listed the similarities and differences in the economic sphere, another did a chart on political comparisons, another on personal similarities, another on personal differences. The charts were put up around the room and the class as a whole added to them, and compared each item with the United States.

D. Another class concluded the China/Africa unit by making a very large collage of women in Africa and another one of women in China. They combined pictures they found in magazines and their own art work. They mixed scenes from the past and the present. These made a colorful visual impression that they constructed into a kind of kiosk that stood for a time in a corner of the school hall.

COMPARISON OF MAJOR CHANGES IN CHINA AND AFRICA

CHINA	AFRICA
GENERAL	
1. In China, change for women grew from the political creation of new social norms resulting from the Communist Revolution of 1949.	1. In Africa, the impetus for change for women came not as a political ideology that was enforced, by and large, from the top down but from the less direct, less planned interaction of changing economic, political and cultural forces in the society.
2. In modern China, men and women are encouraged to work together to upgrade the status of women in order to eliminate the extreme differences of sexual status of Old China.	2. This process of change is complex and more like the situation in America where the struggles and pressures of the women themselves sometimes bring them into direct conflict with each other and with men.
3. The changes in China are generally seen as beneficial to the status of women.	3. Change has not always been beneficial to the status and power of women in Africa. In some spheres, there has been a deterioration of women's power.
ECONOMIC	
Differences	
1. More jobs are available for women, particularly in what was once traditional male work.	1. Europeans tend to ignore the traditional roles of women and offer preferred job opportunities to men.
2. Women have been encouraged to participate in national economic modernization.	2. Women don't participate in the cash economy to the same extent as men.
3. Women are considerably less dependent on men than traditionally.	3. In towns, women have become more economically dependent on men.

Differences (Cont.)

4. With land redistribution, women received land and have been trained in modern farming techniques.	4. Land has been taken from women; women are left out of modern developments in agriculture.
5. Women are trained for industrial work.	5. Technical training for women lags behind similar training for men.
6. Women have mobility to do their work, as do men.	6. During the Colonial Period, men migrated to new work while women stayed at home. Now, poor and upper-class women are free to travel and work; middle-class women tend to stay near home.
7. Women are assigned work; they are encouraged not to work when national production is low.	7. Women now have greater latitude to choose the type of work they want to do.

Similarities

1. Most women work outside their home.
2. Most women are economically independent from their husbands.
3. In some spheres, women do not receive equal pay for equal work and are not given the higher ranking jobs.
4. Educated women do not have to fight the job barriers that women do in the West.
5. Women may join same-sex associations and unions which give them collective economic power.

POLITICAL

Differences

1. All women, regardless of rank and education, are encouraged to participate in politics.	1. Wealth and status are often requirements for political office.
2. Women's rights is seen as part of class struggle and men and women both work to upgrade the status of women.	2. Instead of working with women to secure women's rights, men have tried to replace the old tribal authority over women with European paternalistic attitudes.

Differences (Cont.)

3. The government has demonstrated a fairly strong commitment to implementation of women's rights.	3. Although women have their rights "on paper," there has been little effective implementation of these rights.
4. Political dissent is curtailed.	4. Women are free to voice their opposition to political practices.

Similarities

1. Women have the right to vote.
2. Women participated in the military struggle in the years of revolution and/or independence.
3. Women have been elected and appointed to political posts, but the problem of "tokenism" remains.
4. Women are behind men in holding key influential positions.
5. Women have more political participation within local institutions than within national ones.
6. Women's political associations that are formed around the special needs of women are important.
7. Equality for women is one of the national goals.

PERSONAL

Differences

1. Women no longer have the possibility of class status.	1. Class differences remain and may have increased with the growth of a middle class and an educated elite.
2. Personal happiness is found by serving the people and the revolution.	2. Personal happiness is increasingly seen as meeting one's own needs.
3. At all stages of life, women live and work within a group context.	3. Women may choose to work and live alone in the towns.
4. Women are encouraged to sever the ties with China's past and to change.	4. Women who become too "modernized" may be criticized.

Differences (Cont.)

5. Strict morality forbids sexual alliances before marriage.	5. Men and women are relatively free to form sexual unions before marriage.
6. Dating is discouraged.	6. Men and women have opportunities to meet.
7. Prostitution has been eliminated.	7. Prostitution is increasing.
8. Women are less concerned with how they look.	8. Some women conform to Western standards of beauty.
9. Women wear functional clothes and somber colors.	9. Women wear bright colors and dresses or robes.

Marriage and the Family

10. Chinese women actively resist the power and structure of the traditional family.	10. Some women regard the traditional family structure as a positive strength.
11. Marriage occurs in middle to late twenties.	11. Marriage often occurs when a woman is in her teens.
12. Women are considered equal partners with men in marriage.	12. In most marriages, husbands retain dominant authority.
13. Men are encouraged to participate in housework and child-rearing.	13. Men usually do not assume responsibility for housework and child-rearing.
14. Wife beating is not allowed.	14. Wife beating still occurs within some marriages.
15. Polygamy and concubines are not permitted.	15. Polygamy is not encouraged but it is considered permissible for a man to have mistresses.
16. Women favor small families and practice birth control.	16. Birth control is available, but most women desire many children; barren women are pitied.
17. Childcare is provided for working women.	17. Women have more responsibility for childcare than they did within the extended family.
18. Divorce is discouraged.	18. Divorce is fairly easy to get and women are getting custody of their children.

Differences (Cont.)

19. The "old ways" or counter-revolutionary thought are blamed for society's ills.	19. Women are blamed for social problems related to homelife and childrearing.

Education

20. The concept of an educated elite was severely attacked.	20. An educated elite has been created.
21. All women are educated as a result of the 1949 campaign to erase illiteracy.	21. Girls tend to be discouraged from continuing their education.
22. Girls are expected to do as well as boys in school and are taught the same subjects.	22. Boys are expected to achieve more than girls. During Colonialism, girls did not receive the same education as boys.
23. Little is known about the personal lives of Chinese women.	23. Women are writing and publishing works that express their feelings about their personal lives.

Similarities

1. In the Years of Transition in China and during the Colonial Period in Africa, women were influenced by the standards of "feminine" beauty imported from the West.
2. Women are encouraged to be strong and healthy.
3. Women increasingly desire a natural look (e.g., trend of African women to return to the traditional hairdo and dress).
4. Marriage, motherhood and family life are highly valued.
5. Women may choose their marriage partners.
6. Families or the Party or local associations in China still play a large part in encouraging marriages.
7. There is a trend toward the nuclear rather than the extended family.
8. There is a lessening of kinship ties and the influence of the family on decisions between husband and wife.
9. New groups and associations are replacing the role of the family group.

Similarities (Cont.)

10. Women still have the major responsibility for housework.

11. Women have the major responsibility for child-rearing.

12. Children within extended families in Africa and at school in China are taught group cooperation and how to take care of themselves and others.

13. Women who are uneducated and were raised in the traditional way have lower status.

IF YOU ARE GOING TO CONTINUE CULTURAL COMPARISONS WITH TWO OR MORE CULTURES, REPEAT THE SAME SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES.

BACKGROUND OVERVIEWS

Women's Power

Carolyn Reese

Introduction

Too often the activities in which males have traditionally had power -- politics, war, commerce -- seem to be the only roads to power. Yet, women too have had traditional modes of power. In showing how women have exercised power, we have divided women's power into three categories in the overviews -- political, economic and personal, and surveyed women's power in each category in both traditional and modern times in the culture studied.

It is important for students to realize that there are significant differences in women's power, depending upon the social structure in which they live and the activities in which they are involved. For example, it is interesting that queens in old England had tremendous political power but very little personal power. They were like puppets in respect to decisions such as who would make the best marriage partners for them. In the present-day United States, a woman may have the personal power to decide whom to marry, but lack power when it comes to being paid on a par with men for similar work.

> *STUDENT ACTIVITY: Before students study what constitutes power in traditional cultures, they should think about power in their own lives and the lives of women they know. What do you think of when you hear the word "power"? Using your definition of power, who has that power? Is there a difference in the kind of power men have and women have? What political power do women today have? What economic power? What personal power? Students' answers should be framed in terms of specific activities: That is, in each case they should answer the question in terms of what exactly a woman had the power to decide or accomplish.*
>
> *When students have discussed "power" enough to have a feeling for the variety of ways it is manifested, read to them some of the examples of political, economic and political power from this essay.*

Definitions and Examples

Political Power: Political power usually means involvement in government. However, in Sources of Strength, we use the term in its widest sense. For instance, a woman in an extended family who exerts considerable control over everyone in the household, from family members to servants, is exercising political power, i.e., she influences individuals and groups to act in directions of importance to her.

There are, of course, examples of female rulers, or of cultures where women had governing power because the tribal structure was matrilineal (line of descent traced through the mother), or matrilocal (daughter takes husband to live at the mother's home). However, there are numerous instances where women in matrilineal or matrilocal societies did not have such power.

In our view, a woman may occupy a low position in the social hierarchy but still have power, such as in cultures where her role as mother is central to the culture (matrifocal cultures). For example, a young Asian-American tells how her mother was the center of her family:

> ...her strong character dominated most of our young world. Her role was as an Asian woman that of a living 'vessel of culture.' She carried out the rites of ancestor worship, taught us Chinese etiquette, observed the traditional holidays...in essence, she taught us that we were Chinese. 1

Sometimes political power is quite subtle -- for example, a woman might be "the voice behind the throne," if her husband or son is in a position of leadership. Knowing the strong mother-son bonds in Africa, we might assume that in the following recollection, this African woman was in a position to influence her son.

> The most interesting or important thing I can well remember was when my first son was installed as village head after his father... During the installation, many pieces of

> advice were given to him in my presence.
> Traditional rites and customary rites
> were bestowed on him. [2]

Women have demonstrated their power when they have individually or collectively refused to conform to their culture's expectations of them and have aggressively demanded specific rights or concessions. For example, Sojourner Truth, a noted African-American leader, was a classic non-conformer whose protests have been highly acknowledged by history. This is illustrated as early as 1865 when she pressured the president of the street railroad in Washington, D.C. to get a law passed prohibiting segregated cars. In spite of the new law, Sojourner Truth encountered continued discrimination in the street railroad and dealt with it thusly:

> Not long after this, Sojourner, having occasion to ride, signaled the car, but neither conductor nor driver noticed her. Soon another followed... but they also turned away. She then gave three tremendous yelps, "I want to ride! I want to ride!!! I WANT TO RIDE!!!..." People, carriages, go-carts of every description stood still. The car was effectually blocked up, and before it could move on, Sojourner had jumped aboard. Then there arose a great shout from the crowd, "Ha! Ha! Ha!! She has beaten him." The angry conductor told her to go forward where the horses were or he would put her out. Quietly seating herself, she informed him that she was a passenger...neither a Marylander nor a Virginian to fear his threats; but was from the Empire State of New York, and knew the laws as well as he did...
>
> Sojourner rode farther than she needed to go; for a ride was so rare a privilege that she determined to make the most of it. She left the car feeling very happy, and said, "Bless God! I have had a ride." [3]

A recent instance of collective nonconformity as a means to power can be seen in the behavior of Julia Aguilar who was one of the many Chicana workers striking in 1972 against the Farah Manufacturing Company, a large manufacturer of men's and boys' pants.

> We women are much more on the go now than before. Because we were women, we were staying behind. Now, we just bring our children to our meetings, and we bring them to the picket lines. Sometimes they ask, "Are we going to the picket today, mommy?"
>
> It's kind of hard with kids. But I'm willing to sacrifice myself and I think my husband is beginning to understand. Like when I first wanted to go on a speaking tour to the West Coast, my husband told me I couldn't go. But this time, he could see how my going would help the strike. He's for the union all the way. [4]

Students should be alert to less obvious female forms of political power such as that of match makers. In spiritual activities, too, women sometimes had their own brands of power. As witch doctors, shamans, prophets, women could foretell the future, disclose evil, control weather, and thus influence the entire community, or key persons in it. In the description below, Higilak, a shaman, must tell her people, the Copper Eskimos in the Northwest Territory, whether it is safe to make an excursion:

> Higilak began by delivering a long speech setting forth the whole question at issue. Suddenly she uttered cries of pain and covered her face in her hands. Dead silence followed for a few minutes, a silence that was only broken by an occasional remark uttered in a low tone by someone in the audience. Presently Higilak began to howl and growl like a wolf, then as suddenly ceased and raised her head, when, behold, two canine teeth, evidently a wolf's, were protruding one from each corner of her mouth. She leaned over to Avranna (another man) and pretended to gnaw his head, then began to utter broken remarks which her audience caught up and discussed, though very little of them could be interpreted...I saw her carefully drop one hand towards her long boot, into which she apparently slipped the teeth, for a moment later her face reappeared without them. This was the critical moment, the moment when the wolf's spirit inside her body gave its answer to the question at issue. A few broken words issued from her, uttered in a feeble falsetto voice that was almost inaudible. Her audience was bending eagerly forward, drinking in every syllable. In

> about two minutes it was all over and Higilak, after a few more cries of pain (the familiar was leaving her) followed by two or three gasps, resumed her normal bearing...In speaking of this seance some time afterwards, the natives stated as an incontestable fact that Higilak had been transformed into a wolf. 5

Economic Power: Economic power encompasses a woman's ability to work for pay, to control the use of her earnings, to engage in trade or other business, and to inherit money and property. If her economic activities are valued by the society -- whether the work be household chores, childraising, or farming -- then she is likely to gain power from doing them.

In this statement from an African woman who lived according to the norms of her tribe, we see her exercise of economic power:

> The main occupation of this place is trading and I started this by going to market daily with my late mother until I was up to the age of selling my own wares by myself. As my mother was a fish seller, she taught me how to sell fish until finally she assisted me to buy my own canoe and hired some active men to paddle it for me. From this I could clothe myself and was able to educate my children to what they are today. 6

Students will find that in most cultures economic power was not accorded women directly. Rather, they participated in the economy in an auxiliary fashion, as wives and daughters. Their work enhanced their families' income or their husbands' businesses, but often did not wind up in their own hands. In colonial America, a woman named Mary Provoost inherited money from her father, invested it in her husband's business and upon remarrying, continued to manage the business. This letter was written by her husband, who quite clearly, but privately, acknowledges his wife's once-removed economic power:

> Two nights ago at eleven o'clock, my wife (gave birth to) a daughter and is in as good

> health as can be expected of any woman, for till within a few hours of her being brought to bed she was in her shop, and ever since has given the price of goods to her apprentice, who comes to her and asks when customers come in. The very next day after she was brought to bed she sold goods to above thirty pounds value. And here the business matters of her shop, which is generally esteemed the best in New York, she with an apprentice of about 16 years of age perfectly well manages without the least help from me, you may guess a little of her success...The greatest of my good fortune is in getting so good a wife as I have, who alone would make a man easy and happy had he nothing else to depend on. 7

Sometimes women attained their economic power by default -- but attained it nevertheless. From China, here is an account by a woman who experienced the Communist Revolution:

> My grandmother was a very cunning and capable woman of the old school, and despite the wealth of the family she was never satisfied unless more money was pouring through her fingers into the family coffers. After my grandfather died, shortly before the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty, my grandmother became almost supreme authority in our home. This was because my father, who as eldest son should have assumed his position as head of the family, was sunk in opium smoking and cared little for anything but personal indulgence. My own mother was the capable and ambitious daughter of a big salt merchant, and she was a perfect support for my grandmother. 8

Personal Power: In having personal power, a woman has control over her own body and time. Personal power involves decisions about whether to marry and whom, whether to have children and how many, with whom to be friends, and when and where to travel. Here are some statements from women who feel they do have power over major aspects of their personal lives. First, the reflections of a young, present-day woman in her 30's, from the United States. Having an independent income, she feels in charge of her time:

> It can be splendid not to work for a while, because it changes the rhythm. You can reflect on what you've done. There's no feeling of being indolent. I like being by myself for long periods of time and do not need an occupation. After two months, though, it doesn't work for me. I begin to feel the need for a raison-d'etre. 9

Two women from the Ojibwa Indian tribe, Gaybay and her mother, enjoyed substantial independence and freedom; in particular, they were able to choose whether to live by themselves or associate with others, and whether to marry or stay single.

> Her mother, Keeshka, was widowed when Gaybay was a girl of about ten or twelve, and the older woman chose to remain single, living alone with her daughter. She taught Gaybay how to manufacture mats, rabbit-skin robes, and birch-bark roof coverings. The two women kept up with all the seasonal occupations, making maple sugar and maple syrup in the spring, gathering rice and berries in the summer, and catching fish and killing large and small game in the fall, drying it for winter use. They never associated with other people, always living by themselves on an island. Eventually Gaybay did marry, but she was soon widowed and returned to live with her mother. The two took up their economic pursuits as before. Keeshka never did remarry, but Gaybay had five husbands. During the periods when Gaybay was a wife, she performed only the conventional women's tasks of taking care of the home and helping her husband on a hunt at his request. But during her intervals of widowhood, which were much more lengthy, she found no difficulty in adjusting to the occupational life of a man. 10

In many cultures and historical periods, women's personal power has been quite limited. Yet, in various important concerns, women have at times been able to make choices that were highly important to their personal lives. In the case of Baba, a Muslim who lived in Africa in the early 20th century, she was able to select her polygamous husband's second wife.

> When we had lived together, Malam Hasan and I, for about seven years Danfangi, the chief of Giwa town, died, leaving his wife Adama pregnant. She and I put our heads together -- she used to visit our compound -- and I said "Won't you marry

> my husband? We can have a son and live happily together." Four months after she had had her child we started to seek her in marriage. An old man was also courting her, but she was young and did not want him.
>
> Then I took Malam's gifts to Adama, she and I used to discuss our affairs together; she used to come to our compound and we would have a talk, I would go to their hamlet and gossip to her. 11

While for men achievement has often been a way to gain power, for women innate physical beauty has been a path to power. A concubine or mistress might be chosen for her beauty and placed in a position of great importance. The information in the overviews and readings will provide teachers with numerous opportunities to point out ways in which women have been socialized to see beauty as a means to power. For example, in many tribes in Africa adolescent girls were secluded and fed large amounts of food, since plumpness was considered beautiful. When a girl attained the desired state, she did indeed feel a sense of power:

> Efuru grew more beautiful every day. The camwood did a lot to make her already smooth body smoother. She looked very plump and appealing to the eyes. She was an object of attraction; men, women and children stopped to watch and admire her.
>
> So on Market day, Efuru dressed gorgeously. She plaited her lovely hair very well, tied velvet to her waist and used aka stones for her neck. Her body was bare showing her beautiful breasts. No dress was worn when a young woman went to the market place after the period of feasting. Her body was exposed so that the people saw how well her mother or her mother-in-law had cared for her. A woman who was not beautiful on that day would never be beautiful in her life.
>
> Efuru went around the market and was greeted by the people...One of the women gave her some money.
>
> "You are very beautiful my daughter: take this," and another woman gave her some money also. Efuru thanked them and went on. When she had gone round the market, she went home without buying anything. 12

Not so different is the feeling of power this 15-year-old girl felt when she became a beauty queen in Ohio.

> "I have the pleasure," said Freddy like a professional, "to present to you the new Queen of the S.L.T. Bunny Hop -- I might even say the Basketball Queen of Baybury Heights."
>
> Not me, throbbed my temples. Never me.
>
> "...that beautiful miss from Sigma Lambda Tau, the Keystone's choice, the sweetest profile in Ohio, the Queen of the Bunny Hop, Sasha Davis!"
>
> The music blared. Me! I couldn't believe it!
>
> "That's you, Sasha," said Freddy, hugging me tightly and bending over to plant a loud kiss on my cheek. He pushed me up onto the platform. "Get up there now, honey, it's all yours!" I didn't dare take my eyes off him. "You're the Queen, Sasha," he yells up from below. "Smile!"
>
> The others have disappeared. I'm all alone on the platform. The silver S.L.T. crown is on my head, and my arms enfold a huge bouquet of daffodils, tied with a blue satin ribbon on which are stitched in gold the letters S-L-T. In a circle below me everyone is singing out our song to the tune of "Stardust" and watching me. I smile till my gums show. I feel tears stream down my cheeks. Cameras are flashing. I feel so foolish and so happy. I am the Queen. 13

It is hoped that through exposure to the materials and participation in the activities of Sources of Strength, students will be able to identify a far richer range of possibilities for personal, political and economic power than they might have previously realized.

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Overview of Women in Africa (Nigeria): Traditional

Carolyn Reese

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Introduction

The overview on traditional Africa will examine women's lives before foreign civilizations significantly changed life patterns of Africa. As with China, we are interested in seeing how a culture defines the roles of women before the impact of change. What were the patterns of women's lives before the British imposed colonial rule, before the introduction of a modern economy, before urbanization, before westernization? What were the conditions -- political, economic, personal -- that governed women's lives? Within the boundaries of traditional society's expectations, what power did women exercise?

Traditional African Village Life

Africa was a tribal society. Tribal and regional distinctions and diversity within Africa were and are enormous. In Nigeria alone there are 235 different languages and groups of people. We have decided, therefore, to limit our look at women in traditional African tribal life to one area -- West Africa, and to one country within that area -- Nigeria.

Within Nigeria, our overview will focus most often on a series of similar tribal groups -- the Ibos and Ibibios of southeastern Nigeria. The Ibo and Ibibio Tribes represent typical village forest life in Africa. There will be many times when the overview and the students' reading will describe cultural phenomena common to many African tribes -- certainly, at least, to West African tribes.

We have chosen to look at the experiences of women in these small villages in southeastern Nigeria for other reasons as well: (1) Most of the slaves sent to America came from West Africa. (Students will be studying the African traditions of African-American women later in the course) and (2) A prime source of oral history information in the homework reading from Old Wives' Tales comes from the experiences of women in the Ibibio tribe.

About the Ibos and the Ibibios: The Ibos and Ibibios lived in the region bounded by the Niger, Benue and Cross Rivers in southeastern Nigeria.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Have students locate West Africa and then Nigeria. Use a map to give students clues as to where Ibo and Ibibio Tribes would be found.

The social structure which the villages developed in Old Africa is representative of life in traditional Africa. A dozen or so villages grouped together into one political unit and shared a common meeting place which served as their market as well as their ritual and political center. But the main social unit in these village tribes -- and in most tribes in Africa -- was the extended family. In Africa, it was, and often still is, the bonds with the family into which one was born and into which one married that formed one's most important relationships.

> *COMPARISON: (1) In most pre-industrial societies, this has been the case. See, for example, Anne Oakley's description of marriages in 17th century England in her book Woman's Work: the housewife, past and present. Can students define what their extended families would be? Do any students live in an extended family? (2) The extended family remains the norm for many cultures today.*

Extended Family -- Main Social Unit: The extended family in Africa consisted of one's closest relatives. At its core are the husband and one or more wives (depending on the wealth of the head of the household) and the wives' children. The extended family also included married sons and their wives and perhaps the mother of the household head. An uncle, aunt or unmarried younger brother of one of the wives might also be part of the extended family. Even though they considered themselves one group, not all members of the extended family lived in one house.

Huts Arranged in Compounds: Even the smallest family unit was contained in a compound arrangement rather than in a single house. This compound was a series of huts, perhaps surrounded by a wall, with the male head-of-house living in the major hut or rooms. Each village consisted of the scattered compounds of 75 or so kinsmen, divided into lineages and sublineages.

The head-of-house lived alone in his hut, unless he chose a favorite son to be with him. Each wife had her own hut for herself and her children. Sons remained in their father's compound, since it was considered improper for a son to found an independent compound during the lifetime of his father.

With the death of the father or compound head (who might have been the brother or senior half-brother, or the father of the family), the compound underwent change. The property and the wives of the late compound head went to his male heirs. His wives and daughters did not inherit property.

When daughters married they left the compound while sons' wives and additional wives of the male household joined the compound. Other persons might join the compound through family links or by being exchanged as slaves, or by being given by other families for apprenticeship.

Democratic Political Ways in Villages: In the Ibo and Ibibio tribes, village societies were rather democratic. There were no sharp distinctions of wealth, age and sex; the ideal was that no one should acquire too much control over the lives of others.

Because of the extended family systems, villages in traditional Africa tended to have a fairly high degree of stability. In fact, kinship, rather than physical boundaries, was what separated villages from each other. Governmental authority came from either hereditary or elected leaders, who were elders. The elders were men who had done some deed which gave them rank or they were men chosen by the existing elders.[1]

Nevertheless, political squabbles and tribal war did occur. This required that every village have trained warriors. These confrontations did not greatly disrupt or change the traditional order over time.

Farming Involved Everyone: The wealth of the tribes was limited. The Ibos and Ibibios lived in the rain forest on land that was not rich.

Although these tribes hand-produced such items as cotton cloth and pottery for trade, they farmed mostly to supply their own needs. Farming consisted of cultivating large garden plots and extracting palm oil from tall palm trees. A former slave wrote this about his Ibo homeland in 1789:

> Agriculture is our chief employment and everyone, even the children and women, are engaged in it. Thus we are all habituated to labour from our

> earliest years. Everyone contributes something to the common stock; and, as we are unacquainted with idleness, we have no beggars.[2]

This was not an economy of cash, wages and profits, but rather of barter, and perhaps the exchange of cowrey shells.

PERSONAL POWER

Focus Questions:

In looking for spheres of power in the personal lives of African women, see if they have control over

- *whom they marry;*
- *their rights within marriage;*
- *whether or not to have children;*
- *the people to whom they relate;*
- *where they live;*
- *the standards of beauty and womanhood.*

Girlhood

Girls Valued Less: In old Africa a son was desired more than a daughter. One reason was that men were needed to be warriors; another was that if a woman had a son she was certain to be cared for in her old age. Yet, girls were never devalued to the extent that they were in old China. The birth of a daughter was usually seen as an asset because girls brought wealth into the family through marriage payments the husband gave his in-laws. Girls were also valued because they were trained early to do much of the hard work of the compound. They primarily took care of most child-rearing duties and freed their mothers for other work. Even now it is not uncommon in Africa to see a small girl bathing or carrying a younger sibling.

Girls Skillful in Complex Work: For the first three years of her life, a girl baby was as spoiled as her brother. But from that time on, girls and boys were taught different tasks and were sometimes forbidden to learn the work of the other sex. Girls remained particularly close to their mothers and learned the complex and varied skills they needed as an adult.

DISCUSSION:

Let's see if in America today childhood skills are different for the two sexes.

(1) Can students think of any activity (hobby, sport, lesson) that they felt they were excluded from or that they were afraid to try because of their sex?

(2) Think of some skill(s) you were taught at home. What was the skill? Who taught it to you?

Teacher: Keep track of responses to see if a pattern of fathers teach sons "male skills" and mothers teach daughters "female skills" develops.

Cooperation Between the Sexes: Little girls and boys did continue to play together and both were encouraged to be physically active -- to develop their muscles and become strong. Strong affection developed between brothers and sisters. In fact, strong family ties were and are a mainstay of African life, and children were trained from infancy to develop these ties by actively protecting one another. Brothers tended not to look down upon their sisters because they were girls; each sex appreciated the different skills the other sex was learning.[3]

> *DISCUSSION:*
>
> *In students' experience, do girls and boys grow up non-competitively and with strong bonds in America today?*

Rites of Passage Crucial in Girls'/Boys' Lives: When they reached puberty, girls and boys in Africa both underwent rituals which symbolized their passage from childhood to adulthood. For girls, the rite had two main goals. One was to show that the girl was ready to marry and have children. Since marriage and child-bearing were central roles for a woman, these rituals were key times in her life.

> *TEACHERS' NOTE: Students may react negatively to some of the following information unless it is carefully presented. What may seem exotic and/or disturbing to students when viewed from their perspective, might be accepted with satisfaction by women in the culture being discussed. We would like students to look at women's roles as nonjudgmentally as possible. Try to let the women, or the culture, through the readings, describe their feelings. Teachers should see also the list of strategies for responding to any negative reactions from students. This list directly precedes the next section on Womanhood.*

The other goal was to initiate the girl into her tribe and into her age-group.

Age Group as Sisterhood: An age-group in Africa is the group that goes through the initiation exercises together. This same-sex peer group remains friends and acts as a source of support in times of trouble throughout life. (Men also had same-age friends they could always count on.) For a woman, this group formed one important element of the "African sisterhood" we shall later see repeated in other forms. In terms of both tribal identity and age-group identity, and as a sign that now one was an adult, these rituals were a source of power for women.

> *DISCUSSION:*
>
> *Do students have opportunities to develop close relationships with each other that would form a "sisterhood" that they could count on throughout their lives?*

One Female Ritual: Female circumcision (clitoridectomy, often called "bathing") was believed to be a crucial ritual for a woman to undergo before she became pregnant. Usually the clitoridectomy was done at puberty. Where it is done today, it tends to be performed at a younger age to lessen the pain. There are numerous explanations for the practice of clitoridectomy. It may be that the clitoris was considered male and that its removal was thought to make the girl a true female. Since sensuous pleasure is highly valued in Africa and young girls as well as boys may seek it in mutual play when young, the ritual may have been a way to insure that the girl was not promiscuous after marriage. Certainly, clitoridectomy was a very painful process, even if the pain was eased by the fuss made over girls during this time.

Most initiation rites are painful because the idea behind them is to prepare the individual for the taxing tasks that adults must perform. In Alex Haley's Roots, there is a detailed discussion of the male circumcision process and the pride young men took in passing it. Obviously, the ritual was a test. Some of that testing holds true for the female bathing ritual. Perhaps the ritual was a preparation for the hard life of women, particularly for labor pains, since it was felt that clitoridectomy would make childbirth easier. It is true, though, that girls had no choice in whether to participate in the rites. Girls who did not conform would be driven from the tribe.

There is the possibility that the whole clitoris was not removed, that more of a symbolic cut was made. Certainly, the practice never seemed to keep women from sexual activity.

Fattening Ritual: The pain of clitoridectomy was lessened by the ritual that followed it -- "fattening." This involved a period of seclusion in a house where the young girl did little else but eat high calorie foods. The length of her seclusion varied from three months to six years. The longer the period, the greater the prestige given to her father, since only wealthy men could afford to maintain an inactive girl for a long time. (Sometimes the prospective husband was responsible for the girl's upkeep.)

During seclusion, the girl lived in a separate room or house with a number of other girls. Someone else prepared her food and she was expected to eat as much as possible to become sleek and fat -- a sign that she was well taken care of. It was at this time that she was instructed in sex, in farming, in food preparation -- in all she would need to know in marriage. Since she was denied exercise and the food was high in calories, sometimes the girl being fattened was particularly susceptible to disease.

At the end of the fattening seclusion an elaborate celebration usually was given so that the village could admire the girl's beauty. In many of the readings in Old Wives' Tales, students will see that this is considered a most important time for a woman. She was thought to be at the height of her power. She was pampered, admired, given gifts and recognition. Iris Andreski notes that "there is in fact a curious parallel between the Eastern Nigerian's fattening of maidens and the coronation of tribal kings in other parts of West Africa."[4]

In the story of Efuru by Flora Nwapa, the experience of coming out was exciting for Efuru even after a very limited fattening period of only one month.

> Efuru grew more beautiful every day. The camwood did a lot to make her already smooth body

smoother. She looked very plump and appealing to the eyes. Now that the wound had healed, she went out with other women who were circumcised like her. They were objects of attraction; men, women and children stopped to watch and admire them.

So on Market day, Efuru dressed gorgeously. She plaited her lovely hair very well, tied velvet to her waist and used aka stones for her neck. Her body was bare showing her beautiful breasts. No dress was worn when a young woman went to the market place after the period of feasting. Her body was exposed so that the people saw how well her mother or her mother-in-law had cared for her. A woman who was not beautiful on that day would never be beautiful in her life.

Efuru went around the market and was greeted by the people...One of the women gave her some money.

'You are very beautiful my daughter: take this,' and another woman gave her some money also. Efuru thanked them and went on. When she had gone round the market, she went home without buying anything. [5]

COMPARISON: In some places in the U.S. today there are debutante or "Coming Out" parties, "sweet sixteen" parties and more informal "coming-of-age" events, such as learning to drive a car. Can students see any parallels between these events and those in Old Africa? In the U.S. there are also more formal rites, such as the religious confirmation, graduation from educational institutions, and getting military papers. Do formal and informal rites of passage give young persons power they didn't have before?

TEACHER'S NOTE: Strategies for responding to negative reactions by students to the information on rites of passage:

Mention other parts of the world where clitoridectomy is performed or where there are restrictions on sexual pleasure for women.

- *In the United States in the early 19th century in some areas, forced clitoridectomy was given to prostitutes.*
- *Chastity belts were used in Europe in the Middle Ages.*

Students might discuss when in their own culture young people undergo any "rite of passage." If no rites exist for them, would it make sense if they had such symbolic acts at key times in their lives?

Debate the following proposition: In the U.S. adolescence has become more an extension of childhood than a preparatory stage to adulthood.

Womanhood

After a girl's rites of passage, she was ready to assume the responsibilities of womanhood. In traditional Africa, two roles for women were stressed above all others -- motherhood and work. The more children a woman had, the higher the status she was given. She was also valued if she was strong and could do hard work, or if she was clever and could make a profit through her skill.

Childbearing and Childlessness: The most important path to status for a female was childbearing. Children were a woman's main source of social interaction and love when she was young, and her sole providers when she was old.

A childless woman was pitied, and throughout the readings from traditional Africa, the plight of the barren woman is dramatically told. In Efuru, even though Efuru and her husband Adizua are happy and respect each other, the village gossips.

> 'I bet they are not as happy as they look. You give them two years, and we shall see what will happen.'
>
> 'Seeing them together is not the important thing,' another said. 'The important thing is that nothing has happened since the happy marriage. We are not going to eat happy marriage. Marriage must be fruitful. Of what use is it if it is not fruitful? Of what use is it if your husband licks your body, worships you and buys everything in the market for you and you are not productive?'
>
> 'Are you not in a hurry?' said the only reasonable one among them.
>
> 'What hurry? Of course not. What are they waiting for?'
>
> 'But they have been married for only one year.'
>
> 'Hear what she is talking. How long does it take a woman to be pregnant? What are you talking about?'
>
> 'Nonsense, I must see Adizua's mother. A woman, a wife for that matter, should not look glamorous all the time, and not fulfill the important function she is made to fulfill.'
>
> 'Yes, you must go to her,' the others agreed. 'Go to her and find out what she thinks herself.' 6

The solution for a childless marriage, after the woman has taken all the "cures," was, and sometimes still is, for the husband to seek either another wife or get a divorce. Again, in Efuru we see the reason why.

> A year passed, and no child came. Efuru did not despair. 'I am still young, surely God cannot deny me the joy of motherhood,' she often said to herself. But her mother-in-law was becoming anxious. She loved her daughter-in-law very much. She defended her anywhere she heard people say unkind words about her. When Efuru was sad, she consoled her, told her that a child would come when God willed it. Neighbours talked as they were bound to talk. They did not see the reason why Adizua should not marry another women since, according to them, two men did not live together. To them Efuru was a man since she could not reproduce. 7

Unfortunately, women also suffered the loss of their children through death. Because of the many disease-bearing insects, infant mortality was high. In fact, children slipped out of life so easily that they were considered to have a special partiality for the spirit world, to which it seemed they were always trying to return.

In "A Gift From Somewhere" by Ama Ata Aidoo, a young woman's children never seem to live beyond six months. She feels that she must keep trying to have children: "All I must do is to try and prepare myself for another pregnancy, for it seems this is the reason why I was created."[8]

DISCUSSION:

- *Why do you think it was important to have so many children? (African climate conducive to disease, tribal wars, need for workers in these agricultural societies to share tasks and as insurance for old age.)*
- *Has it ever been important in America for families to have many children? When? (Until the 20th century this was very important in every region. In colonial times, only 50% of the children lived, and the average age for women was 30 years.)*

COMPARISON: Compare the overview information on childbearing in West Africa with the present day feelings in America about having children. White middle-class families have zero to two children; some classes and some cultural groups put a strong emphasis on having children. This is true, too, of groups who lose their offspring (especially males) because of prison, wars, deaths.

Discuss the status in the U.S. of single women with children, married women with no children, women who are not married and have no children.

Ideals of Feminine Beauty: In Africa, then, a pregnant woman or a woman with a plump baby on her back was seen as attractive. Considered beautiful, too, was a woman who was healthy, strong and had some weight. This showed that she was getting enough to eat and could endure hard work.

In a letter to the magazine Africa Woman, a contributor recently talked of the concept of beauty as being physically fit.

> Every race in the world has its own concept of beauty. For the average African, beauty means a well proportioned body, full and fleshy but not fat, a straight back and a dignified gait. Perhaps the fact that Africans learn to carry loads on their heads from an early age has helped them to develop straight and strong backbones. 9

Remember the fattening ceremony where weight and a sleek body were signs of beauty.

Today, beauty contests are banned in such countries as Tanzania. An editorial in that nation's official government newspaper explains why.

> It is not uncommon in some societies to parade pets and animals so that prizes may be awarded for specific characteristics. However, the parading of womenfolk like cattle is alien to Tanzania's sense of culture and dignity. 10

COMPARISON: Students might discuss the role of beauty contests in America. Think about the significance of men's contests as seen in the movie "Pumping Iron" and the Charles Atlas cult.

Another sign of beauty was a decorated body. Much of Africa is warm; few clothes are needed and one could display one's body easily. Both men and women enjoyed wearing feathers, rings, colorful cloths, and color and patterned scars on their skin. Hair as decoration was also an African specialty. Elaborate hair coiffures were used on important events and to indicate an individual's place in society. Scarification was often used for similar reasons. Men and women usually received tribal markings when they came of age; these gave them clear identification in a land where many tribes lived relatively close to each other.

> *TEACHER'S NOTE: Students may react judgmentally when they see pictures of tribal Africans with unusual hairdos or scars. The following are some strategies for such negative reactions:*
>
> *Have students recall all they know about body decoration in other parts of the world. For example, a cross-cultural look at forms of beauty and fashions in 1900 would show one African tribe who wore huge disks in their extended lips and a Mandarin Chinese woman hobbling about in bound feet. Yet, it would also show Marquesas Islanders with tatoos covering their bodies, the flattened heads of the Northwest coastal Indians, the elaborate make-up and hair of Japanese women, and well-dressed American women with corseted clothes that distorted the look of their hips and made moving and breathing difficult.* 11
>
> *Have students see that most people of both sexes are "slaves to fashion." In what ways do they, the students, decorate their bodies? How much do they conform to fashion? Have them define what they consider fashionable for clothes in high school. Did teenagers wear similar clothes 10 years ago?*

Marriage and Family

In the choice of whom to marry women had no power. Even more than in traditional China, marriage was considered a bond between two lineages as well as between two individuals. The family, not the individual woman and man, made the decisions about suitable marriage partners. The concept of individual choice did not exist nor did the idea of marrying for love or companionship. Love might come to a couple after marriage, but it was not a prerequisite for marrying, and husband and wife were not expected to do things together as they tend to be in the United States.

A Woman's Power Within Marriage: Once married, however, the woman had some limited forms of power. A woman represented her extended family; because of this, she had certain rights and could actively retain her ties with her family. These natal kinship lines formed her basic family unit for all her life and were of greater importance to her than her marriage. Often a female might be closer in companionship to an uncle than to her husband. As a source of support this bond could give her some power to act in her own behalf.

In fact, in the Ashanti kingdoms (Ghana), the wife continued to live in her parents' home. She worked on her husband's farm and cooked his food, but she sent the food to him by messenger; if she was still at home when her children were older, they brought their father his food and ate with him. Not until the children were grown would a wife join her husband.

Since a woman retained a privileged position in the village of her birth this created extended bonds of social relationships that both drew villages together and increased a woman's ability to watch out for her own interests. Unlike old China, in Africa a woman was compensated somewhat for the hard work or her role as a married woman by the support and protection of her family and her community. This gave her a sense of security married women in China did not have.

DISCUSSION:

Do married men and women in America today retain ties with their parents, sisters and brothers? Would this vary among different cultural groups? Among different lifestyles?

Bride Price: The family's involvement in marriage began at the first betrothal arrangements. Usually betrothals were negotiated years before the marriage took place. At some point the prospective husband made agreed-on payments, often called the bride price, to the bride's family. The bride price might include payments to all the members of her extended family. In western eyes, the bride price made it appear as if parents sold their daughter as they would cattle. To Africans, the bride price showed the value of the girl: her removal from her family demanded some payment to compensate for the loss. For a bride price, a man gave either livestock, valuables, labor service, or symbolic good (today it may be some cases of beer) as a sign of commitment to the bride and to their future children.

Sometimes the husband's family did not complete the marriage payments until a child was conceived -- thus ensuring the woman's worth to them. The marriage ceremony, then, was more a complex process than a separate event. Sylvia Leith-Ross claims that she could observe no actual ceremony for Ibo women.

> Indeed I do not know at what point the Ibo considers the girl as his wife, whether it is when she first goes to his compound or when the marriage is consummated, or when she first conceives, or when the full dowry has been paid. Marriage is more probably a process in his eyes than a single act. 12

There was sometimes a period of "testing" when a girl was introduced into her prospective husband's home and was judged on her skills and taught by her new mother-in-law or co-wives. She might be quite young when this happened. This had value for her, too. Adjustments to her new home were thus gradually and carefully done.

The New Wife: As a new bride in a new village, a woman might know other women and relatives from her natal village who made her welcome. As a new wife, she was well clothed and given light tasks at first and, in time, was given her own hut. Since this hut was hers as long as she was married this gave her some power over her own activities that she had not had when she was younger, and single.

If she was a first wife she automatically had a high status, since wives were ranked more by order of marriage than by age or wealth. This first or "big" wife, had greater responsibility. She trained the junior wives and organized them, as well as the older children, slaves and wards of the compound.

The first wife had economic power in that much of the wealth of the compound was regulated by her. In some areas, this first wife could gain political power by succeeding a deceased husband, if he was a chief.

By contrast to the first wife, the junior wife was a servant to the first wife unless she was her husband's favorite -- often known as the "love wife." This gave her a position much like that of a Chinese wife in relation to her mother-in-law. The junior wife could raise her status only if she had children when the first wife could not.

Polygamy: Polygamy, the marital arrangement in which a man may have more than one wife, was common in old Africa. It was regarded as logical in a system where young men were killed regularly in tribal skirmishes. Because of the strong emphasis on family, polygamy also insured that every woman had a man and therefore children. Polygamy was important, too, in an economy where women did farming; an added wife meant more wealth.

In the student readings, polygamy is shown as creating both harmony and tension. For men, polygamy carried with it heavy social and economic obligations, as every wife had to have her own hut and her own plot of land. Also, if a husband's interests conflicted with those of his wives, his wives were likely to express their political power by organizing against him until he acquiesced to their desires.

Women, on the other hand, might squabble over land or be jealous over a husband's attentions. Yet, in traditional Africa, a woman would have been considered stupid if she wanted a monogamous marriage; with so much work to be done, the sharing of chores and field work was vital. After the childbearing years were over, polygamy offered a woman a measure of tranquility. With other women assuming her chores, she was then free to travel, free to rest more. This was her time of "liberation" and it put her on an equal level with her husband.

Polygamy underscores the distinct sex-divided sub-cultures of African family life. Women excluded men from their leisure activities and required companionship and good conversation from each other. Women also supported each other in times of illness, widowhood and in mutual economic ventures.

Sometimes it was the woman who initiated the idea of another wife to her husband. In Baba of Karo by Mary Smith, Baba has no children and she wishes her husband to marry a friend of hers who has a child. In the following description of the wedding, notice that the groom seems to be the least important person in the marriage process. Baba is Moslem, of Hausa descent, and the ritual is not Southern Nigerian. Yet, the concept behind the acquisition of a new wife holds true for both cultures.

> When we had lived together, Malam Hasan and I, for about seven years, Danfangi, the chief of Giwa town, died, leaving his wife Adama pregnant. She and I put our heads together -- she used to visit our compound -- and I said 'Won't you marry my husband? We can have a son and live happily together.' Four months after she had had her child we started to seek her in marriage. An old man was also courting her, but she was young and did not want him....
>
> Then I took Malam's gifts to Adama, she and I used to discuss our affairs together; she used to come to our compound and we would have a talk, I would go to their hamlet and gossip to her....
>
> (Baba's husband and Adama finally decide to marry.)

> The Day of Coming Together (marriage) was a Friday. We were all ready, then at dawn Fagaci sent Malam Hasan to Birnin Gwari. He was needed suddenly on official business. In those days we had no bicycles, he went on foot. Adama came but her bridegroom wasn't there. We had a great feast, there was porridge and chickens, rice and sweetmeats from all the kin in the hamlets round about. At night we took the jere food to the bride's compound and everybody ate it. At night, too, we filled up the compound with visitors, and then the bride was brought. The drummers of the big and small drums, the players of stringed instruments and Fagaci's pipeplayers, they all came to the front of our compound -- the bridegroom wasn't at home. We spent the night enjoying ourselves, the bori came, Giwa, Dangaladiman Busa's mother, was possessed. The menfolk were throwing away their money, and womenfolk were throwing away their money, but the bridegroom wasn't there. When he had been four days in Birnin Gwari he returned. We had set out her dowry in rows in the bride's hut, like the ridges on a farm. The bride with her baby on her back. Her kinsfolk all crowded to the wedding, my kinsfolk from Zarewa came too. We swept the house clean. 13

DISCUSSION:

To reinforce the concept that the extended family was more than a way for the family to live together, students might discuss concepts of communal living and polygamy found in the United States. Consider (1) the Utopian movements, (2) the large southern agricultural plantations where people shared work through specialization, (3) the polygamy of the Mormons, (4) the communes of today, and (5) the polygamy common in Native American tribes.

Motherhood: A woman's bond with her children took precedence over the relationship with her husband. The children, after all, were the basis of her power. As a wife and daughter, a woman was subordinate; as a mother, she wielded considerable authority. This remains true today with the result that few African women resent the constant bearing of children.

COMPARISON: In modern China, marriages ideally are delayed until the couple is 27 years old. Families are much smaller than they once were. This tends to happen in those societies where work other than that of the roles of wife and mother is rewarded.

A woman was not exactly "tied down with a toddler" in old Africa. Childrearing was shared among the various wives, older daughters, and a woman's younger kinsfolk. A mother's domestic chores mainly involved food preparation and making clothes and not the supervision of her children. In fact, children commonly used the word "Mama" to refer to more than one woman.

DISCUSSION:

In many pre-industrial cultures childrearing is not done exclusively by the child's mother. What is the effect on women in American families of having the major responsibility for childcare? (Affects decisions about working outside of the home; if woman must work, creates problems involved in having two jobs, creates a need for public childcare.)

Divorce: Just as all of one's kin were involved in the marriage, so were they involved in the divorce. If there were problems in the marriage, there was no social stigma attached to the woman's returning home. This fact further illustrates how the married woman gained personal power from her connections with her natal family. When the woman's family decided that she was being mistreated in some way, they either brought the problem up with the husband or used the wisdom of the village elders to settle the dispute. If the wife was returned to the husband, he might have to give her family something for having mistreated her. But if there was a permanent separation and it was deemed to be her fault, the bride's family might have to pay back her bride price. Thus, it was in the family's interest to keep a marriage together.

In Things Fall Apart, one finds an example of how a woman's family acted in support of her interests and made life difficult for her husband. Uzowulu claims that three of his wife's family arrived one day, beat him up and took his wife and children away. Since he had married her with "my yams" and felt he did "not owe my in-laws anything," he concluded that "the law of the clan is that you should return her bride price."[14]

The woman's children, however, belonged to her husband, and if she left him she had to leave her children too. In "A Woman's Life" by Marjorie Mbilinyi (a reading selection from the Continuity and Change section), Mama Thecla feels she cannot leave her husband who beats her because, as she tells her daughter, "...he wouldn't let me take you children away. You are his children according to the law."[15]

Sometimes the wife's close attachment to her kin could override any fondness she might have felt toward her husband. This was clearly seen in Baba's description of the breakup of one of her marriages in Baba of Karo. (It should be said that the Hausa had a higher incidence of divorce than did the Ibo or Ibibio.) This piece is significant as it shows the importance of kin ties over marriage ties. Notice, too, that Baba frequently calls her aunt Rabi her "mother."

> For fifteen years I was in Malam Maigari's compound, then my father's sister Rabi came and said 'Look at everyone bearing children, look at everyone else bearing children; leave that compound and you will bear children too.' I said 'I will not leave him, I am not going anywhere else.' My aunt said 'Leave him and you will have children.' I refused and said I would not leave his compound. From the very first she had not liked this marriage.
>
> When I was going to leave I did not tell anyone. I went to the compound of the Chief of Zarewa, Sarkin. He sent for Malam Maigari, he said 'See the daughter of the people of Karo has come to break off her marriage.' We went home, Malam came into my hut, he talked to me and asked me to be patient. I said 'It's my mother (her aunt), she wants me to leave you.' We returned to Sarkin Zarewa. Malam's elder brother said, 'They must not be separated. Ask her where is the fault, no one has ever annoyed her, neither

> child nor man.' Sarkin said 'Think it over, go back and make up your marriage.' I said 'My mother says I must leave, she says I must leave him.' We were there for some time, then Malam Maigari said 'I am in love.' I said 'It is not anyone's fault, my mother wants me to leave.' The chief gave me my divorce paper, he gave Malam his, Malam said he did not wish me to return the sadaki (bride price), I was to keep it, he would prefer it so. I went to Aunt Rabi's compound and stayed there. Malam Maigari sent a message to say that if I ceased being angry would I please come back and we would re-make the marriage. Aunt Rabi was rejoicing over me, she was happy, so I said I would not go back. 16

Widowhood: Unlike in China, widows were expected to remarry. A widow usually would marry one of her husband's brothers. If there was no male relative in her husband's family, her sons would have to take care of her until she remarried. It was important that every woman be part of a family.

One can see, then, that while the African woman did not choose her marriage partner, she had the power to eventually reject her husband, if she felt the need to do so. In addition, she was not totally dependent on her husband for either emotional or economic support. Depending on her age and her need, she could turn to her own family or her own sons when she sought support.

ECONOMIC POWER

Focus Questions:

When thinking of women's economic power in Africa, see if women had control over

- *the type of work they could do;*
- *any property or possessions;*
- *getting help with their domestic tasks so they could earn a living;*
- *how they used what they grew, or how they used what they earned as traders.*

Marriage as Business Partnership: In Africa, an adult woman was expected to support herself and her children. This meant that she was allowed to work outside the home if the compound was not self-sufficient. A husband/wife relationship in southeast Nigeria was not like that of owner/chattel but more like that of business partners in a common enterprise. Marriage was as much a business relationship as a means for procreation. The partners worked to maintain the family and to perhaps accrue wealth for its own sake.

It can be said that the woman worked more than the man in this business partnership because she was expected to help support the whole household as well as to support herself and her children. Soon after she was married she was not only given her own hut but also her own separate possessions and a plot of land to cultivate. Actually, land ultimately belonged to the whole tribe; the idea of buying it or selling it did not exist. But although a woman did not own the land, it was considered hers as long as she farmed it. A woman owned any surplus she produced and could do with it whatever she liked, after she helped maintain her children. The idea was, and is, to carry one's own weight, to be as independent as possible.

This economic independence within marriage did not exist for women in China or in much of the industrialized West. The idea that a woman should work beyond the duties of her home remained unique in western eyes into the 20th century. In fact, when Sylvia Leith-Ross in the 1930's told an Ibo man about the embarrassment a European man might feel if his wife worked outside the home, the Ibo man asked in disbelief, "But if she has a gift?"[17]

COMPARISON: In pre-industrial Europe married women as well as men were expected to carry on with productive work outside the home, whether in agriculture, textiles, or some trade. Anne Oakley, writing of 17th century England, says:

> There was no idea of the woman's economic dependence on the man in marriage; it was not the duty of the husband to support the

> wife, nor was it the duty of the husband to support the children. Men did not at this time regard marriage as necessarily involving the assumption of a serious economic burden, but, on the contrary, often considered it to be a step which was likely to strengthen them in life's battles. 18

Female-Male Division of Labor: Although women worked and kept some of their earnings, there was nevertheless rigid sex-role divisions which determined the kinds of work women did in pre-colonial Africa. Women almost exclusively handled the domestic duties, with food preparation being one of the most laborious and time-consuming of these duties. This could take hours; water had to be hauled and there was the incessant pounding of millet, corn, rice, cooked yams, plantain. Men were the hunters, the livestock keepers, the cloth makers, the artisans, the builders and the musicians. But both women and men specialized as herbalists, storytellers and traders; trading, though, was considered more women's work than men's.

Women as Farmers: Beyond their domestic duties, most women in Africa worked in agriculture. Africa is considered to be the "region of female farming *par excellence*."[19] Even today, in many tribes, nearly all the work associated with the total production of food is done by women. It is felt by some Africans that men need women much more than women need men. For example, in the Ibo and Ibibio tribes, while young men helped clear the fields, the women planted, weeded, harvested and then, if they could, traded the produce. Only certain yams were considered a man's property to cultivate and harvest.

Cooperation Among Women: There was a substantial sharing of work among women. Wives usually helped farm each others' plots, and sometimes women formed small collectives with their personal friends and hoed each other's lands in turn.

Women as Successful Traders: The second major female activity outside the home was trading. It was through trading that women mainly achieved some economic independence. In

"Growing Up in Nigeria," a young woman recalls the myriad chores her mother did daily. Then she mentions the one activity that lifted them above subsistence level -- the making and selling of "gari" (a kind of flour made from cassava):

> Then came my own hobby of selling it. I liked very much to carry it out to sell because of the money we got for it and because it was really a good opportunity for me to walk far from home, have free discussions with my customers and friends. 20

From this quote we can see the mobility and freedom to choose friends that women in Africa had when they traded.

> *COMPARISON: In cultures where women trade, they have much greater freedom than in cultures where they are primarily engaged in domestic work.*

Little girls early learned to deal with customers and trade. In "The Twin Who Survived" in Old Wives' Tales we read of the woman who as a youngster was taught the livelihood which supported her:

> The main occupation of this place is trading and I started this by going to market daily with my late mother until I was up to the age of selling my own wares by myself. As my mother was a fish seller, she taught me how to sell fish until finally she assisted me to buy my own canoe and hired some active men to paddle it for me. From this I could clothe myself and was able to educate my children to what they are today. 21

In Efuru, Efuru has the reputation of being the queen of the traders. Constantly, she is admired because "everything her hand touches makes money." In pre-colonial Africa, trading was not as extensive as it is today nor was money used; but as an activity available to women to increase their personal wealth, it had no equal.

> *COMPARISON: Among most traditional cultures in South East Asia, a large share of the selling and buying was left up to women. But in China, before the revolution, only seven percent of the Chinese labor force in trade were women.* 22

POLITICAL POWER

Focus Questions:

Which sex exercised primary political power over

- *family land arrangements?*
- *marriage arrangements?*
- *village government?*

In what spheres did women specifically have political power regardless of whether their power was greater than men's?

Through what types of actions did women exercise their political power?

Subordinate Female Political Role Is Common: In most traditional African tribes women did not have a political role equal to that of men. For example, in the Ibo or Ibibio cultures, men had direct control over women through the patrilineal (handed down from father to son) control of land and marriage arrangements, and through their authority within the compound. Men also controlled the village assembly, which was the main Ibo and Ibibio political institution. Most of the leaders in village-wide discussions and decisions were men. Women had a role in some of these gatherings as wives, mothers or sisters, and they could speak if the matter directly affected them; but final decisions were made by the male elders.

Non-Subordinate Female Role Also Occurs: In other African cultures, however, oral traditions tell of a variety of African queens, of women as founders of lineages and kingdoms, of women who led migrations and of women warriors. For example, in the early 18th century a large female army served the Fon kings (Dahomey) as a separate military force. Most accounts, though, tell of women fighting alongside the men. There are also tribes where women had great value because the inheritance line was matrilineal. Many of these tribes are found in West Africa in the region from which many slaves were brought to America.

Men's Secret Societies: Yet, in most African tribes the norm was for men to have greater direct political power than the women. The secret religious societies which existed all over Africa were founded on clear sex division and promoted the greater political power of men. A number of such societies in West Africa strongly believed in the "subjugation of women both in the home and in society."[23] Women were strictly forbidden any knowledge about the societies' rituals. Upon initiation in the societies, men immediately achieved a form of power which sometimes was used to terrify women. For example, women hid during the hostile-mask parades for fear of being seen and beaten. In Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, the student reading selection mentions a special hut belonging to the religious society:

> These women never saw the inside of the hut. No woman ever did. They scrubbed and painted the outside walls under the supervision of the men. If they imagined what was inside, they kept their imagination to themselves. No woman ever asked questions about the most powerful and the most secret cult in the clan. 24

Power Through Women's Councils (Mikiri): Thus, women were excluded from certain "male only" forms of religio-political power. Yet, despite the patrilineal organization of Ibo and Ibibio society, women had a role, more accurately a series of roles, in the political life of their communities. In activities within the sphere of their own sex, women achieved a relatively high degree of political participation and as a group could make their needs and concerns known. One way women organized politically was through their own council meetings. These village-wide meetings came to be called mikiri during colonialism. All married women could attend. In large villages, each compound nominated its own spokeswoman to attend the meetings.[25]

There were no official leaders in these groups. As in the male organizations, women of wealth, of wisdom, or who were eloquent and vocal (who "got mouth") took leading roles. If the need arose, "spokeswomen" were chosen by general discussion to contact the men or women in other villages.

The mikiri were not secret and seemed to have the approval of the men. They had many functions which varied from place to place. Generally, though, the mikiri articulated the concerns of women as a group and could, if necessary, take a united front against an offending person, usually a man.

DISCUSSION:

The mikiri are, perhaps, a more subtle form of political power than students are accustomed to recognizing. Yet, *pressure groups or interest groups greatly influence American politics. Can the students identify some of these groups? Can they name any same-sex groups which are influential on the political scene?*

Mikiri's Power of Enforcement: The primary method women used to enforce their decisions became known as "sitting on" or "making war" on the offender. The women might destroy property or mete out corporeal punishment; but the more usual method was to gather together and proceed to loudly ridicule the individual, perhaps by beating on his or her hut with sticks while shouting derisive comments.

The following are types of cases the mikiri might be involved in:

- Mikiri would decide on sacrifices to be made to Ajala, the earth spirit, and would consult a diviner as to the proper place to plant the women's crops.
- Mikiri protected the economic interests of women. In one case, it was reported that the men in one village grew careless about tending their livestock and the cattle trampled the women's growing food. The women in the village swore an oath to come to the aid of any woman who killed a cow found in her coco yams.
- After repeated requests to the young men in one village to keep the paths to the market cleared, the mikiri had all the women refuse to cook food for the men until the job was done.
- Mikiri also could protect a woman in a personal quarrel with her husband by discussing her problem and either deciding to act collectively in her behalf or deciding that she was at fault. To support her, they might send a "spokeswoman" to tell him to apologize and to give his wife a present, or they might "sit on" him until he repented. 26

COMPARISON: Compare the mikiri with the "Speak Bitterness" sessions in China and with consciousness-raising women's groups in America.

Women's Age-Group Gatherings: Women would also attend age-determined gatherings in their villages as "daughters of the village" into which they have been born. They were allowed in these cases to take part in settling disputes over women's concerns in the village.

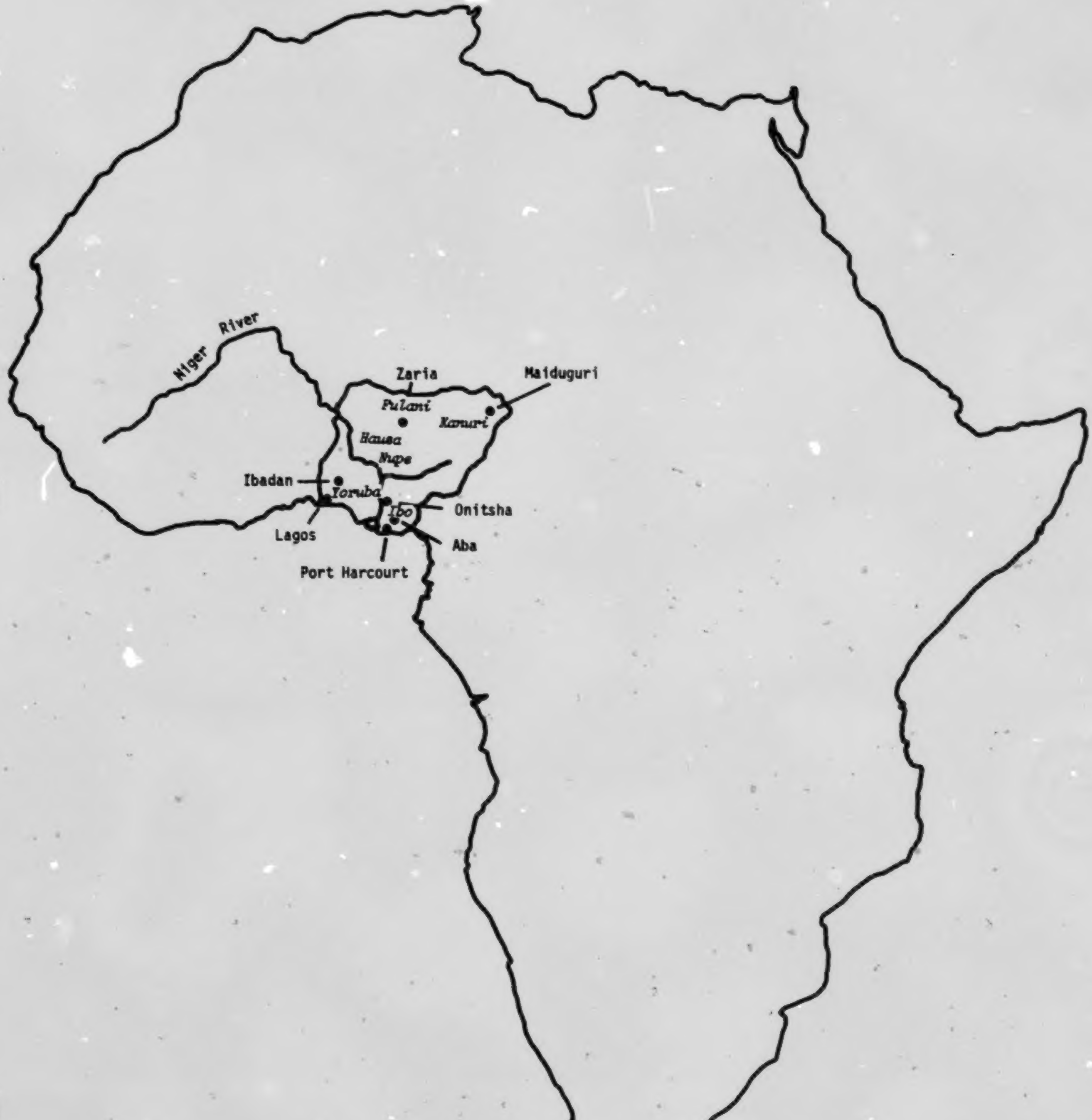
Women's Secret Societies: Women, like men, had their secret religious societies. Most were formed around the circumcision and fattening ceremonies. These societies enhanced female solidarity in the same way the mikiri did. After marriage, even if they no longer lived in their own village, a woman might return to her initiation society to assist with the initiation of younger women or to give birth. These societies still exist and it is felt in some areas that any woman running for political office would have trouble if she did not belong to an initiation society.

In some places women became priestesses who consulted the oracles or led the women's songs and dances. (There also were female gods. The Ibo deity Ala is a very powerful Goddess who represents the Earth and controls fertility. She is the queen of the underworld and "owns" all human beings, alive or dead.)

Background Information for Teachers

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AFRICA: NIGERIA


Niger River
Zaria
Maiduguri
Fulani
Kanuri
Hausa
Nupe
Ibadan
Yoruba
Ibo
Onitsha
Lagos
Aba
Port Harcourt

TIME LINE FOR NIGERIA

DATE	POLITICAL EVENTS
Pre-colonial Villages	
1100	Yoruba established inland city-states.
1300	Kingdom of Benin established.
	Hausa and Yoruba states grow stronger. Nupe tribe founded.
1450	Islam introduced.
	Overseas slave trade to Spain, Portugal, Italy.
1500	Europeans seek gold trade in West Africa.
	Slaves sent to West Indies.
Overseas Slave Trade	
1600	Yoruba kingdom of Oyo at peak of power.
	Dutch, Portuguese, English traders visit Benin.
	Rise of new city-states in Delta.
1700	Slave raids divide Yoruba peoples.
	British, French, Americans in slave trade.
1750	Muslim revival begins.
1800	Christian missionaries arrive. Decline of Benin.
	Niger delta city-states' height of trading expansion.

DATE	POLITICAL EVENTS
1804	Fulani conquest of Hausaland.
1818	International abolition of slave trade. Many wars in Yorubaland. Palm oil trading with Europeans in delta.
1850	European trading inland.
1857	Church missionary schools established at Onitsha.
1862	Lagos becomes British Royal Colony.
Colonization	
1884-85	Berlin Conference. European powers divide Africa, draw artificial boundaries.
1886	Royal Niger Company formed. British firm empowered to govern Niger River Basin.
1900	British annexation of Nigeria.
1914	Unification of Nigeria.
1922	British call direct election of representatives to legislative council.
1928	Ibo men made to pay taxes.
1929	"Women's War."
Independence Movement	
1930	Youth groups formed, seek government reforms, independence.
1946	Constitution: regional advisory councils formed; North represented in legislature.

DATE	POLITICAL EVENTS
1947	Labor government in Britain urges establishment of local government councils in colonies.
1951	New constitution: attempt to balance regional diversities.
1954	Federation of three regions set up.
1957	New constitution: Nigerian internal self-government.
1960	Independence from Great Britain. Suffrage except in Northern region; males only enfranchised.
Independence	
1963	Nigeria becomes a republic in British Commonwealth.
1966	January - Army seizes control (Ibo). July - Second army coup (North, Fulani).
1967	Ibos form independent nation of Biafra. Civil War.
1970	"Biafrans" surrender. New federation of 12 states established. Regionalism abolished. General Gowan head of federation.
1975	Bloodless military coup. General Mohammed creates seven more states. Attempt at more local control.
1976	General Mohammed assassinated. General Obassanjo names military head. "Devolution of power" - further attempts toward uniformity in local control and increase local power.

Major Regions and Tribes of Nigeria

Nigeria has 235 different languages and groups of people within its borders, giving it the largest population in Africa. English is the only language common to all. More than half of Nigeria's people is made up of four major tribal groups: the Yoruba, the Ibo, the Hausa, and the Fulani.

West (Yoruba)

The Yoruba is the major tribe of Western Nigeria. They are known for their art (naturalistic bronze and terra-cotta sculptures), their complex cosmology of gods and goddesses, and their trade-oriented city-states which reached the peak of their power in the mid-17th century (the Oya kingdom). The Yoruba were traditionally fisherfolk, farmers and traders. Most Yoruba tribes are matrilineal; thus, Yoruba women exercised considerable power in the affairs of the tribe and have always had a high status in African society. Today, they form the bulk of wealthy women traders, the "market mammies."

East (Ibo, Ibibio, Edo, Efik)

The Ibos live in the region bounded by the Niger, Benue and Cross rivers in southeastern Nigeria. Their population is larger than that of their neighbors, the Ibibio, Edo and Efik. These eastern tribes hand-produce items, such as cotton cloth and pottery for trade, and farm for their own needs.

The Ibo and Ibibio traditionally lived in semi-autonomous villages, rather than large cities. The highest political unit was the village-group, consisting of a dozen or so villages. The village-group shared a common meeting place, which served as their market as well as a ritual and political center. In contrast to the kingdoms of the Ashanti, Oyo and Benin, these village societies were more democratic, based on some degree of equality. Villages were separated from one another by kinship, rather than by observable physical boundaries.

Niger Delta (Ijaw)

The Ijaw people live on the hot, humid Niger River delta area. The Ijaws came early here and were fishing people and salt makers. Since the delta is prone to floods, many houses here are on stilts. In 1965, offshore rigs struck oil in the Niger delta, with the result that the coastal city of Port Harcourt boasts the largest oil refinery in tropical Africa.

Middle Belt and Jos Plateau (Nupe, Gwanis, Tiv)

To the north of the rain forest, there are wide lands and then open, rolling landscapes which experience seasonal changes. The vast mixture of tribes within this region exhibits an amalgam of influences from the Yorubas in the west and Moslem tribes in the north. However, within this thinly populated area also live peoples who follow a very traditional indigenous African way of life. The major people of this region are the Nupe, Gwanis and the Tiv.

On the high Jos Plateau in central Nigeria are the Bukuru tin mines. Most of the world's supply of columbite is produced in this area. The people native to this region are mostly tribes who came seeking refuge in the hills from the Hausa-Fulani slave raids. Many Nigerians have migrated here in more recent times to work in the tin mines.

North (Hausa-Fulani)

The north is a high plateau area with extremes of climate. The plains are either baked in the hot sun, drenched with torrential rains, or subjected to dry, cold winds. The city-states of the Hausa have spread across northern Nigeria. Fertile in land, skilled in crafts, and experienced in trade, each state was a political unit in itself.

In the middle of the 14th century the rulers of the Hausa city-states became Moslems and the north remains predominantly Moslem today.

The Fulani migrated to northern Nigeria from Western Sudan. Originally a cattle people, the Fulani settled in towns in the early 18th century and became traders. As traders, they encountered and accepted Islam and played a major role in the Islamic revival of the 18th and 19th centuries. After a series of clashes between the non-Moslem people of the region and the Moslem Hausas, the Fulani emerged by 1811 as masters of the North. The Fulani and the Hausas frequently intermarry.

The north has historically been isolated from contact with the West and has a tradition of autonomous rule, which Britain reinforced during colonization.

The Overseas Slave Trade

The overseas slave trade was a significant element that contributed to the breakup of village life. It reached its peak in the 18th century before it was abolished in West Africa in 1818.

Some form of slavery had existed among Africans for centuries. Prisoners of war and convicted criminals were often treated as "wageless labor," liable to be bought and sold. Even now in southern Nigeria descendants of slaves are called osu. Since slaves had very low status and used to have certain ritual duties, among them the cleaning of sacred objects, there was a stigma attached to belonging to an osu family. A kind of slave caste was created with few people marrying outside it. Some of the readings in Sources of Strength deal with the problems in modern intermarriages between descendents of osu and free people.

As early as only nine years after Columbus's first trip across the Atlantic, the Spanish throne legalized the importation of slaves to its American colonies. Europeans subsequently developed an increasing need for massive, manual labor in their new world colonies, and the slave trade was transformed into a major element in the commerce of the Western world.

In Africa there was no irrevocable division between bonded and free persons. Even though of lowest status, the slave in Africa was part of the working group and in some cases was able to buy freedom. (Note the reading "Kafi, the Old Slave Woman" in Paulme's Women of Tropical Africa.) Thus, domestic slavery in Africa and slavery in the Americas, where Africans were chattles in the mines and plantations, differed in character.

With the involvement of Europeans in the grim business of slavery, new political units grew in Africa. In coastal Nigeria, small fishing villages formed themselves into a highly organized trading network based on the export of women and men brought from the inland. While the coast prospered, the older, inland societies suffered. Acts of aggression, with community against community, sometimes resulted from the pressure from slave traders to obtain slaves.

In Baba of Karo, Baba describes such a slave raid in northern Nigeria at a time when the British were making efforts to stop slavery.

> One day Mai Sudan's men kidnapped Kado's wife and the bride and a little girl called Laraba and Rabi our father's wife, Kadiri's mother -- they caught them all as they were working in the rice-field. The raiders were scouting around looking for people to kidnap, they seized women and children and men too if they were unarmed.
>
> On that raid they went first to Wawaye, the hamlet of my father's brother Ubangida. The raiders came at night, Mai Sudan's men, they broke into the compound and took away three of his children and Gambo his wife, who was long pregnant, and about ten of his slaves; Ubangida and two of his wives hid in the fireplaces under the beds. There were about twenty horsemen and ten men on foot. They banged on the entrance-door, everyone rushed out terrified and they caught them. When Ubangida came out he shouted and shouted, they hit him with a stick and he fell down and he could hardly drag himself into the hut near the house-door, he hid and they didn't see him. No one nearby heard anything, they were all asleep and they didn't hear the men come. The wicked men, the kidnappers came at night and seized the house -- Mai Sudan's men.
>
> Ubangida got back his wife and children, he paid ransom, 400,000 cowries for his wife, 400,000 for his three children, 400,000 for her unborn child. The man who had bought her when the kidnappers sold her into slavery said he would not give her up until he saw what she brought forth, so Ubangida said he would pay for her child within her.[27]

People, divided among themselves, sometimes were driven from their land, and this created increased social disruption. Modern societies emerged, often built from the amalgam of old tribes. Ibadan, a thriving modern city, is one of these "new" towns established by slave trade refugees.

A Brief Political History of Nigeria During Colonization

During the slave trade, direct contact with the western world was limited to the coast. Although Portuguese traders had made contact with the coast of Nigeria as early as the 15th century, this part of Africa offered little besides gold to attract Europeans before the slave trade.

Because of the industrial revolution in Europe in the 18th century, however, people had accumulated private capital and were eager to invest it. Africa, in its political disunity, was ripe for conquest. In Nigeria, the majority of Europeans who settled in trading communities or were missionaries were British. Lagos was annexed in 1861, and through a mixture of treaties and outright conquest, all the area now known as Nigeria was under British control by 1900.

When Britain annexed Nigeria as a colony in 1900, they first had to give it its name. The country was then divided into two protectorates -- one in the North, one in the South. In the South, the British found they could establish fairly direct political control, but in the North it became expedient to allow the local emirs a high degree of political autonomy. In fact, the high commissioner of the North had to take military action in order to abolish slavery in that region.

It was along the coast that Britain was ultimately to receive its greatest blow, because it was there that the African thrust for freedom for Nigeria grew. A growing educated elite, whose income came from participation in the cash or Western-style economy, became catalysts to nationalist sentiment.

In 1922, Britain was pressured by Nigerian nationalists to revise the colony's constitution to allow for elected representatives; consequently, the Nigerian Nationalist Democratic Party (NNDP) was formed. This party won elections during the 1920's. At first, it was mainly reform-oriented, but once in office the leaders began to develop rapport with the British administration. A more radical nationalist movement developed through the youth leagues of the 1930's. In this movement, some were concerned with reform in education, some with economic and social issues.

During the years immediately following World War II, Britain pursued its policy of gradualism by promulgating in 1946 a new constitution for Nigeria. Regional advisory councils and representation of the north were provided for in this plan, but it met resistance from the National Council. A second constitution was formed in 1951 to attempt to balance the regional diversities nourished by earlier colonial policies. Yet, it was at this very time that regional and ethnic consciousness was deepening.

By 1951 there were three dominant groups: the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) dominated in the east, the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) in the north, and the Action Group (AG) among the Yoruba in the west. The federal legislature with ministers chosen from the regional assemblies did not have the appeal of the regional governments which were in closer touch with their constituencies. This was to be a major political reality for Nigeria which is not totally resolved today.

While the NCNC and AG aimed for early independence, the NPC delayed in the north because of fear that the southerners' longer exposure to European institutions and ideas would dominate the larger, more populous northern regions.

By 1957, when the Eastern and Western regions achieved self-government, independence was not far off. A new constitution provided for a federal prime minister who would choose his own cabinet. The North was granted self-government in 1959. Ababakar Tafawa Balewa of the NPC was agreed on as prime minister and the NCNC joined the NPC to form the government. With each region granted autonomy, the way was open to independence, which came in 1960.

A Brief Political History of Nigeria Since Independence

In the words of a famous Nigerian freedom fighter, Dr. Nnamdi Asikiwe, Nigeria was given her freedom "on a plate of gold."[28] But seven years later a Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, was to see the situation differently:

> We should have known that freedom should be won, not given on a plate. ... The British who had done precious little to create a spirit of common nationality in Nigeria during the 50 years they were in control, made certain on the eve of their departure that power went to that conservative element in the country which had played no part in the struggle for independence ... Within six years of independence Nigeria was a cesspool of corruption and misrule. 29

It is certainly true that these first years of independence showed the weakness of the system of regionalism. People tended to give political support to men of their own tribes. There was widespread resentment of the power exercised by the largest group, the Hausa-Fulani, with accusations of fraudulent elections and political corruptions. Since the Northern region exercised the most power because of a greater population, the census figures of the country became a political hot potato, when it seemed that the South was gaining in numbers. The North refused a fair census recording, and tensions continued to build.

Nigeria was upset in January 1966 by five young army majors. The Nigerians went wild with joy at the fall of the disunited and corrupt government of the federation. Then, in this country where tribalism was so endemic, people in the North and the Yorubas in the West began to feel that this military coup was a sinister plot by the ambitious Ibos of the East to seize control of Nigeria.

A countercoup occurred in July 1966, this time led by northerners. Ibo civilian workers in the North were killed in a series of riots and survivors fled to their homes in the East.

In 1967 the Ibos broke with the Federation to form their own country, Biafra. The Federal military government declared this illegal and a tragic and bloody civil war broke out. The Ibos genuinely feared genocide by the other tribes and hung onto the struggle long after their cause was lost. A starving and decimated Ibo population finally surrendered in January of 1970.

General Yabaku Gowan took charge, declared a general amnesty, and created a new federation of 12 states. Some progress was made in the next years, but continuing corruption and the usurption of extraordinary powers by some in the military brought this leadership to its downfall in 1975.

General Gowan was replaced by General Murtala Mohammed, who immediately undertook major reforms. He set up seven new states to try and encourage more local representation. Military governors, so powerful before, are no longer members of the Supreme Military Council, which sets major Nigerian policy; instead, they function only on a lesser council. There has been a mass purge of about 10,000 civil servants for inefficiency, and a system of regulating similar bureaucratic abuses is in practice.

General Mohammed was assassinated in February, 1976, and General Olusegun Obansanjo took control. He has promised a democratic election by 1979.

Notes

1. Victor C. Uchendu, *The Ibo of southeast Nigeria* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 19.

2. Basil Davidson, *African kingdoms* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1971), p. 170.

3. Audrey Smedley, "Women of Udu". In Matthiason, ed., *Many sisters* (New York: The Free Press, 1974), pp. 213-215.

4. Iris Andreski, *Old wives tales: life stories of African women* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), p. 38.

5. Flora Nwapa, *Efuru* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, Ltd., 1966), pp. 14-16.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

8. Ama Aidoo, "A Gift From Somewhere," *No sweetness here* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1972), p. 100.

9. Austen Uwenchue, *Africa Woman,* Sept/Oct 1976, p. 52.

10. Audrey Wipper, "African Women, Fashion, and Scapegoating," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* VI, ii, 1972, p. 332.

11. Shapiro, "From the Neck Up," *Unesco Courier*, July 1958, p. 16.

12. Sylvia Leith-Ross, *African women: a study of the Ibo of Nigeria* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), p. 99.

13. Mary Smith, *Baba of Karo: a woman of the Moslem Hausa* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), pp. 174-175.

14. Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Premier Books, 1959), p. 86.

15. Marjorie J. Mbilinyi, "A Woman's Life," in Katz and Milton, eds., *Fragment from a lost diary and other stories: women of Asia, Africa and Latin America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 264.

16. Smith, *Op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.

17. Leith-Ross, *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

18. Anne Oakley, *Woman's work: the housewife, past and present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 21.

19. Ester Boserup, *Woman's role in economic development* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970), p. 16.

20. "Growing Up in Nigeria," *Africa Woman*, June 1958, p. 74.

21. Andreski, *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

22. Boserup, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

23. Andreski, *Op. cit.*, pp. 60-62.

24. Achebe, *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

25. Leith-Ross, *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

26. Judith Van Allen, "'Aba Riots' or 'Women's War': British Ideology and Eastern Nigerian Women's Political Action," paper presented at the annual meeting of the African Studies Association, (mimeographed), Denver, Colorado, November 3-5, 1971.

27. Smith, *Op. cit*., pp. 68-69.

28. Wilfred Cartey and Martin Kilson, eds., *The Africa reader: independent Africa* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 166.

29. *Ibid*.

Student Learning Materials

Traditional

Non-fiction

Andreski, Iris. Old wives' tales: life stories of African women. New York: Schocken Books, 1970. 190pp. Paper. $2.45.

Ms. Andreski has gathered stories and biographies from more than two dozen elderly Ibibio women to obtain a first-hand record of a pattern of human life which the impact of a foreign civilization had nearly erased. These are a valuable source for student readings because they are first-hand accounts and subsequent homework assignments tend to fictionalized accounts. The "tales," however, are drier reading than the fiction and you might want to supplement some of them with other selections.

There are too many stories to annotate. Each is short, about five pages, and assigning two or three will give students a variety of viewpoints. Also, their short length makes them ideal working material for the "digging" and "personal expectations" activities.

Clark, Leon, ed. Through African eyes: cultures in change. New York: Praeger, 1971. 744pp. Hardcover. Out-of-print. Paper edition in 6 vols. $2.45 each. $12.50 set.

Chapter headings in the hardcover edition are separate volume titles in the paper edition: "Coming of age in Africa"; "From tribe to town"; "The African past and the coming of the European"; "The colonial experience: an inside view"; "The rise of nationalism: freedom regained"; and "Nation-building: Tanzania and the world." If using the separate paper edition titles, you will need only the first. Our pagination is from the hardcover edition.

"Coming of age in Africa" includes excerpts from Anna Apoko's "Growing up in Acholi" (pp. 8-39). These are divided into three parts, of which the first two concern traditional culture. Although the setting is East Africa, themes are familiar. Easy reading. Excellent introductory statements and discussion questions.

"Life styles of African women," a mini-module for secondary level. New York: African-American Institute, Social Services Division, n.d. 8pp. Mimeograph. $0.35 from the publisher, 833 United Nations Plaza, New York 10017.

Four short, easy-to-read oral histories of African women with different lifestyles. The first two are traditional; the last two are modern. A lesson plan, annotated bibliography and annotated filmography are included.

Paulme, Denise, ed. Women of tropical Africa. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963. 308pp. Paper. $3.65.

A collection of six essays by women anthropologists based on fieldwork in Africa, 1950-1960. "Avoiding the usual preconceptions about the inferior position of women in a traditional African setting, each essay deals with woman in her everyday life and with the problems that particularly concern her. This is a new approach, for, since ethnographic research has almost always been exclusively carried out with the help of, and among, the male part of the population, the picture that has emerged has to a large extent been the image which the men, and the men alone, have of their society." (Introduction, p. 1.)

The Introduction (pp. 1-16) discusses the common characteristics among the women studied. Analytical bibliography (pp. 231-293) focuses on scholarly works regarding African women published before 1960.

- Laurentin, Anne. "Nzakara women" (pp. 121-178).

"Natélégé, princess and pioneer" (pp. 130-137). Biography of a woman so famous that her life and deeds have been passed on in story and legend. Representative of wives in a large Central African kingdom, where nobility gave a form of status more comparable to noble women in traditional China than to women in the relatively democratic village-states of South/East Nigeria.

Natélégé was the chief wife of a powerful sultan, Bangassou. She lived just before the influence of white culture overtook this area. This is an excellent description of the forms of power which important, resourceful women could have: Natélégé manages enormous numbers of servants, wives and concubines; she controls the food supply and houses, ultimately heads a village and even commands her own troops. "She was feared like a chief."

Students should also note the lack of power held by other women in the sultan's household and the roles men played in the kingdom. For example, one reason Natélégé could assume so much control was that the men were so often away hunting and fighting.

"Kafi, the old slave-woman" (pp. 137-146). Although Laurentin uses this biography to illustrate the colonization period, we feel it is sufficiently traditional to include here. Kafi is a slave in the court of the same sultan, Bangassou. At this level, women are seen as "a docile and mobile form of currency, their own private joys and sorrows dependent upon a network of dreams...unpredictable and beyond their control."

Kafi moves beyond her slave status when she becomes wife to a minor chief. She reaches a large degree of power for a commoner and ex-slave because she has many children and her youngest son becomes a village chief.

Uchendu, Victor. The Igbo of southeast Nigeria. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965. 111 pp. Paper. $3.00.

"Introduction" (pp. 5-9) is relevant to this curriculum.

Victor, an Igbo, explains his background by telling the story of his mother. Although this story is quite complex one gets a real sense of what the extended family means. Victor's mother's opportunities to make her own decisions plus the duties and obligations she cannot escape are brought out.

Fiction

Achebe, Chinua. Things fall apart. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Premier Books, 1959. 192 pp. Paper. $1.50.

Chapters 9 and 10 (pp. 72-89) are relevant to this curriculum.

This is a fictionalized account of life in a pre-colonial Ibo village. Although the main protagonist, Okonkwo, is male, in Chapter 9 his second wife, Ekwefi, and her only child, Ezinma, are featured. Ezinma is ill and the chapter deals with the trials women suffer over frequent child deaths. In Chapter 10, how the political power of men is reinforced through magical rituals is dramatized. The men, wearing masks, impersonate the ancestral spirits and form a secret cult from which women are barred. There also is a court session where it is decided that a woman's kinfolk were correct in taking her from her husband who beat her.

A reading of the whole book shows the conflicts between old and new, with the coming of the missionaries and colonial government representing the new. Compound life, too, is vividly described. If the students read the whole book, they must concentrate on the female characters when they do their "digging" and "personal expectations" activities.

Aidoo, Ama. No sweetness here. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1972. 166pp. Paper. $1.95.

This is a collection of short stories by one of Africa's most gifted young writers. Although set in Ghana, the stories describe town men and women in conflicts between the values of traditional society and new affluent city standards that is the same in Nigeria. Most of the stories are relevant to the Continuity and Change section, and are annotated there.

- "A gift from somewhere" (pp. 87-99).
  A young woman's babies keep dying and she feels that "all I must do is to try to prepare myself for another pregnancy, for it seems this is the reason why I was created." Then one child lives and her strong attachment to him and her subsequent children ultimately alienates her from her husband. The traditional roles of father and mother emerge making this a good portrait of pre-colonial family life.

Amadi, Elechi. The concubine. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1966. 280 pp. Paper. $2.50.

Chapters 19 and 20 (pp. 165-177), or 22 (pp. 188-199) are relevant.

This story is about the love between Ihuoma, widowed and with children, and Ekwe, about to be married to his childhood betrothed girl, Ahurole. Customs and village decorum forbid this love, however, and Ekwe's marriage to Ahurole is doomed to failure.

In Chapter 19 Ihuoma describes the traditional African sense of love -- "love and sex were put in their proper place. If a woman could not marry one man she could always marry another."

Chapter 20 sees Ahurole and Ekwe married and already the strains that will later break the marriage are there -- Ekwe is too close to his mother and needs a woman of Ihuoma's maturity and Ahurole is unsure of herself and needs a patient man for a husband.

In Chapter 22, after a good section on Ihuoma trading her yams, Ihuoma increasingly is concerned over the attention Ekwe continues to pay her. She is lonely, would like to love Ekwe, but she feels she must conform to the expectations of her village.

Nwapa, Flora. Efuru. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1966. 281 pp. Paper. $2.75.

Chapter 1 (pp. 1-17) or 2 (pp. 18-38) are relevant.

This novel in its entirety is long. However, even though the story takes place in modern times, traditional village customs are depicted making the book an invaluable resource for teachers.

Chapter 1 introduces Efuru and tells of her marriage, against her father's wishes, to Adizua, her first husband. The dowry customs, Efuru's trading work and, most important, her "bath" (clitoridectomy) and subsequent "feasting" (fattening) are described.

Chapter 2 describes the married couple's trading ventures, how Efuru uses the services of a dibia (medicine man) to help her get pregnant, and finally, the birth of her child.

In further chapters Efuru's baby dies and she cannot conceive again. All her problems seem to stem from her lack of fertility. In trading Efuru is successful - "Everything she touches makes money." Yet without children the beautiful Efuru cannot seem to hold on to her husbands; she is "like a man since she could not reproduce."

Shelton, Austin, ed. The African assertion: a critical anthology of African literature. New York: The Odyssey Press, 1968. 273pp. Paper. $3.45.

A succinct introduction to the book as a whole, introductions to each section, and discussion questions add to the value of this anthology. Though not intended for high school, it can be adapted for secondary use.

- Sutherland, Efua. "New life at Kyerefaso" (pp. 123-130).

This short story about the Ashanti of Ghana tells of Foruwa, daughter of the Queen Mother, who is "proud" and will not choose a husband among the available men, with their "empty faces." The village scorns her until she appears one day with a stranger who works hard and improves the village, bringing a new spirit to them all. The Foruwa is honored for her proud qualities which produced a leader for the village. The story also describes the role and symbolism of the Ashanti Queen Mother.

On p. 242 there are excellent discussion questions for the story.

Overview of Women in Africa (Nigeria): Continuity and Change

Carolyn Reese

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Concepts to Define:

indigenous traditions
cash crops
urbanization
westernization
nationalism
national independence

INFLUENCES BEHIND CHANGE

Change for women and men in Africa looks very different from change in China. It has not been as dramatic as in China; it has not been so tied to the concept and progress of a revolution. In Africa, change has come more slowly, evolving from a series of ideas and happenings set in motion partly by the introduction of cultures alien to Africa. The "old" ways exist within Africa to a greater degree than they are allowed in China. Before students look at the position of women in northern Africa, they should gain some understanding of the major occurrences (colonization, change-over to a cash economy, urbanization, conflicts between African and Western ways) which brought pressures on traditional life. These phenomena hold true for most "Third World" nations that experienced an intense contact with the west within the last century.

Europeans Impose Rule (Colonization): European contacts with West Africa were limited to trade along the coast until the 18th century. Then, European investors became eager to develop the African interior, and trading communities, followed by European business companies, were established. Christian missionaries arrived next to convert the Africans. Ultimately, European political control of Africa was accomplished through these combined conquests.

In Nigeria, England became the major political power. In fact, the nation of Nigeria was a European invention; and in order to consolidate England's holdings in this part of Africa, the British grouped all the disparate tribes within a geographical boundary into one political unit and in 1900 called this new nation Nigeria. England administered Nigeria until 1960 when it became an independent nation run by Africans.

Colonization meant that the new European governments overrode the authority of the traditional leaders. However, often the colonialists created new political authorities such as puppet chiefs, or favored individuals, or Africans who rose to power through training in the colonial bureaucracy.

The British also imposed new legal authority and western ideas of justice over tribal power in these spheres. This often disrupted tribal customs and created confusion as to what was "right" and what was "wrong" in individuals' behavior. 1

Europeans Bring in Cash Economy: European political control and dominance in Africa brought other major new directions. A sweeping change came with the introduction of a new economy based on cash and on industrial technology. This changed Africans' way of amassing wealth. It forced them to accumulate pounds, escudos or francs. It also forced them to get a European education as means of entering this new economy.

Disruption of Traditional Ties: In Nigeria, as elsewhere, the colonial goal was to develop a new nation's raw materials and export them to Europe. This meant that large industries were created which drew people out of the villages to live and work near these new jobs. Tribal bonds were broken as people seeking employment left the social and political controls of the village, the tribe and the family. Traditional religions and rituals were also weakened as was the traditional village education which did not provide skills relevant to the new situation.

Growth of Large Cities (Urbanization): New towns and cities grew at the sites of the production areas. Although towns have always been present in West Africa, these relatively large, modern towns emanated from a western culture and economy and were decidedly new entities in Africa. In relatively recent times, these urban centers have grown enormously. For example, Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, doubled in population between 1930 and 1960. No such growth for this short a period of time can be found in any western country. Since World War II, paralleling an increase in the manufacturing industries in Africa, there has been an urban explosion throughout Africa.

The people who moved to the new towns became strongly socialized by the new urban, western ways. This socialization also affected those who did not move to the towns -- but in the villages the old ways could more easily challenge the influence of westernization.

Europeans Try to Impose Their Culture (Westernization): Now that Europeans were directly responsible for political control and were involved with the economic development of young African nations, and moreover, were actually living in Africa, they attempted to make Africans conform as much as possible to European ways. Acting on the assumption that western culture was superior, Europeans used education and missionary activities as two main vehicles for "civilizing the African." Missionaries commonly fought against nudity. Polygamy was considered a shocking acceptance of "fornication." People who became Christians had to disavow their polygamous family life. The payment of bride wealth was treated as if it were the purchase of women. Initiation ceremonies were attacked as "unclean" teaching about sexual matters, and secret societies were called "heathen" and "immoral".[2] African dancing was opposed as was tribal "witchdoctoring"; even the use of African names was discouraged.

> *COMPARISON: A similar approach to the African civilization was taken in America, particularly during the years of slavery. It became important to the slave owners to "Christianize" their slaves and in the process try to wipe out any memory of their African heritage. Students might see similarities, too, in the U.S. government's treatment of Native Americans.*

In schools, African customs and history were disparaged or simply ignored. In short, Africans were taught to imitate the European dress and conduct, and to adopt their culture.

Yet, it is important, too, to see that not all western influences were harmful. The missionary and European education gave Africans awareness of the world outside Africa and created a common language which assisted Africans in communicating with each other. Colonial rule brought some degree of tribal peace to much of Africa and colonial forms of justice certainly made the lives of some people more secure. Physical health also was improved. Finally, as a result of their contact with Europeans, Africans created in themselves a sense of national identity and nationalism. It was this that led to the African assertion for national independence. (Of course, whether nationalism is really a positive phenomenon is an arguable point).

Women Confront New Options: Some Africans who accepted the ways of the west were socialized into discrediting the old African traditions. For others, the clash of civilizations and values, which dominated the period of colonization, brought confusion and anxiety. Today, most Africans are trying to effect some sort of personal balance between western and traditional ways and to ascertain what actions are best for their nation. What is clear is that these changes have produced a multitude of choices for behavior and for action. The writer Ezekiel Mphahlele says that Africans have a "pendulum of choices";[3] his use of the word pendulum is entirely accurate in regard to women.

We shall consider here how much choice the African woman actually has had in these years of change. How much control does she have over the major decisions in her life? How strong is the pull on her of traditional culture and how strong the pull of western ideas? How many new options does she have? How many limits does society place on her?

> *TEACHER'S NOTE: As students read the following sections on economic, personal and political power, they should describe changes in women's power in terms of the number and quality of options open to them in activities, jobs, political influence and persons to whom they can relate. Students should also notice where traditional sources of power* or *lack of power remain, and should consider the degree of satisfaction different women gain from their lives. Finally, this question is important: If a woman has more choices, does she have more power?*

ECONOMIC POWER

This section starts with economic changes because economic occurrences created the greatest impetus for change in the political and personal lives of African women.

Focus Questions:

In the readings or in the overview information, look at the effect of continuities and changes on women's power

- *to grow their own food;*
- *to produce or trade goods;*
- *to do work for which they earn a wage;*
- *to have any say in how the goods they produce or money they earn is used;*
- *to expand their opportunities to work;*
- *to have their work valued.*

In what ways have they more economic power?

In what ways have they less economic power?

In what ways have they more choices?

In what ways have they fewer choices?

Women Take on More Work: The new industries introduced by the colonialists in Africa required a large labor pool. Since women, as the food producers, were the mainstay of traditional villages, men most often were the ones free to migrate to work outside of the villages. In Nigeria, Britain also levied taxes on males as heads of household and this was an added reason men needed to seek cash employment. This departure of males greatly increased the work load on the women left behind. Although women had been the backbone of rural farming, men and boys formerly did the strenuous clearing work; thus, throughout Africa, the absence of men had made life more difficult for women. There are stories of women who, after a backbreaking day of farm work, are too tired to light their fires and prepare supper for their children.[4] The film Malawi: The Women,[5] in its first segment on village life, shows the women complaining about doing the tasks that used to be done by men.

> *COMPARISON: (1) In America during the years of the African-American migration from the South to the North, the women were usually left behind until their men could find work in the northern cities. This created hardships for them. (2) In many groups who immigrated to the United States, the men came before the women--English colonists and late frontier settlers, Asians, East Europeans (see the movie Hester Street). Students might consider these questions: (a) What does this separation of the sexes do to the women who are left behind? (b) What was the effect on women when they finally immigrated to America?*

Western Sex-Bias in Africa: With fewer men working land in the villages, women should have gained greater predominance in the sphere of agriculture. However, the opposite has occurred and the reasons for this highlight the effect that alien values had on economic change in Africa. The European men who arrived in Africa came from a western culture which encouraged men to have "a sporting spirit, to be fearless, indifferent to comfort and danger and to encourage male solidarity and superiority."[6] African women, no less than European women, simply were not seen by European men as people with interests and attitudes beyond the narrow sphere of domestic chores. This attitude had serious repercussions for African women: Men, not women, have been encouraged and trained to cultivate cash crops; when farm machinery was introduced, women were not trained to use it, and colonial and post-colonial training for technical skills have been offered only to men. Most programs for women concentrate on such "feminine" skills as sewing or embroidery.[7] Again, in the film Malawi: The Women, the small town woman is shown attendding her sewing class and complaining about her inability to produce enough food for herself on her too-small plot of land. She is totally dependent on her husband's income and is distressed by the fact that she must pay cash for everything.

Other problems, too, have surfaced for women because of western sex-biased attitudes. For example, by contrast to traditional ways, now land is bought and sold. With the use of great acreage for cash crops, there is less land available, and this means that in some areas women have not been even allowed to buy land.

Sometimes the policy of ignoring women would backfire. There are reports of times when some African men would be carefully trained in techniques to cultivate a large area for a cash crop. Contrary to what was expected of them, they would then turn the land over to their wives to work. The women would subdivide it to hoe it in the traditional way. Usually, however, men assumed the roles given them by the Europeans as a way to replace the loss of their roles as warriors and leaders in tribal life. Unfortunately, women have not been consulted about their economic needs by either African or western men.

COMPARISON: A paradoxical pattern emerges. As agricultural societies have created more farming technology, farming has become more the work of men, even though less muscle power is usually required than in former times.

Women Lose Personal Income: Women are also left out of the cash economy because men now control the returns from cash crops. In fact, women employed by men sometimes work harder than before, yet have no surplus to sell for themselves. Look at the situation of the wives of Ibo palm farmers. Customarily, the Ibo farmer cut down his palm fruits and his wife prepared the oil. She sold the palm oil for her husband but she always retained the kernels to crack and sell for her own profit. The British introduction of oil mills, which processed the kernels, deprived women of employment and income and made them increasingly dependent on their husbands.[8]

Since 60 to 80 percent of agricultural labor in Africa is still women's work,[9] it is important to understand that modernization and technical development have largely benefited men, not women. At the core of much of this change and subsequent reduction of women's power is a basic misunderstanding between the West and Africa about the roles of men and women.

> *DISCUSSION:*
>
> *Choose one side of this question and give examples supporting your view:*
>
> > *Women have more (less) economic choice and power in modern African villages.*

Women Migrate to Towns: The migration of women to towns is another mixed bag of economic gain and loss. To be sure, some women who left the villages with their men and set up market businesses to add to their husband's income did very well. They found they could buy land and increase their wealth to a greater extent than in earlier times. Trading was traditionally a woman's occupation, and with peace established under colonial rule, women could make long journeys to sell their produce, and save the money they earned. Also, with new road and rail transport, women could go further afield for trading and might be away from home months at a time. By 1935, more and more women were long-distance traders.[10]

Towns are still a male's preserve, however. Numerically, men make up the vast majority in all African cities and most of the available work there is geared toward them. Even clerical jobs have been largely the province of men. Most African women have stayed home, in part supported by money sent by their town kin or husbands.

> *COMPARISON: Women in Africa could manage to remain at home because they were partly self-supporting. In Asian countries, where women were not self-supporting, the colonialists had to allow families to migrate with the men. Then they employed women and children in the new industries as well.*
>
> *In America what is the situation for families if a man finds a job in a new location?*

Women Traders Become Powerful: Modern commerce has made the market women a powerful force both economically and politically. In big cities, market women form associations which provide mutual financial assistance, regulate business practices and even lobby the government on key issues. In Southern Nigeria, some societies run bakery, laundry and calabash factories. When they trade, women keep the money they earn. Their trading is one of the few urban occupations that is not subject to male authority.

In some households, too, women -- either wives or friends -- band together to form a trading association. In fact, the feeling of sisterhood present in old Africa is found today in the feeling of the traders for one another. In parts of Nigeria, the associations are like a club and become the "essence of social life."[11]

> *COMPARISON: The sisterhood in the African women's trading associations recalls the sociability of women who work in American Chinatowns.*

Trading Is Strong Option for Uneducated Women: For an uneducated woman, trading can offer a real alternative to menial work or living off the earnings of men. At the end of the book Jagua Nana by Cyprian Ekwensi, the heroine gives up her "high-life" in Lagos to become a trader in Onitsha, another Nigerian town.

> I jus' told Mama dat I goin' to Onitsha. I wan' to become proper Merchant Princess. I goin' to join de society of de women an' make frien' with dem. I sure to succeed. I goin' to buy me own shop, and lorry, and employ me own driver. I goin' face dis business serious. 12

Yet, even in this one sphere of female economic predominance, there are now negative signs. There are too many women traders and as a result, everyone earns less. Also, as marketing becomes modernized, with bulk buying arrangements and modern food packing, women are left out. They are not in control of these operations.

For other uneducated women, often the only work avenues open are brewing, baking, domestic services, and, more recently, sewing. Sewing is a traditionally male industry which has recently opened for women.

New Jobs for Men: Men, not women, were recruited by colonial officials for clerical, secretarial and administrative jobs, and, similarly, in such work as department store sales men are the ones mainly employed. Men who were hired to cook for foreigners justified their participation in a traditionally female task by asserting that they were not cooking, *per se*, but were rather working. At home, their wives or girlfriends, cooked for them.

In Ama Ata Aidoo's short story "For Whom Things Did Not Change," Kobina analyses the situation well as he talks to the cook:

> I am just about beginning to understand. Gradually. You went into training, qualified and have been gaining experience all these years as a cook for white people. You do not

> know how to cook the food of the land because it is your food. And you are a man. And a man normally does not cook. But you cook the white man's chop because that is white man's chop, your job, not food...As a man of the land and your wife's husband you are a man and therefore you do not cook. As a Black man facing a white man, his servant, you are a Black, not a man, and therefore you can cook.

The cook answers:

> Massa, Massa. You call me woman? I swear, by God, Massa, this na tough. I no be woman. God forbid. 13

Problems of Uneducated Women Needing Work: When a village woman arrives in town with a craft skill, she has difficulty fitting into the urban economy. Because she is uneducated, city employers do not want to hire and train her. Further, courses which might prepare her for an urban job cost money she might not have. Without education, she is thrown into a dependency on men which is greater than it had been in her traditional village life. One woman laments this position:

> It is not right to be idle. It does not take me long to cook, or take care of the children. I do not like to ask my husband for money each time I buy something. 14

Prostitution as Means of Economic Survival: Because of the limited work options for women, the high cost of living in towns, and the large proportion of men there, prostitution became one source of income for women. Prostitution was rare in traditional village life. But the number of women who sell sexual services in modern Africa is rising. Now, a family's big fear is that their daughter will become a prostitute if she goes to town. The theme of many readings is that towns corrupt women. Still, there is a different feeling in Africa than in the West about prostitution. When a woman who has worked as a prostitute comes home with money, she does not have difficulty arranging to get married; she may even gain respect for her new city ways.

There are different forms of prostitution. The student readings will portray the "high-life" girl -- a woman who depends on a lover for economic subsistence but does not heavily solicit men. Jagua, in Jagua Nana by Cyprian Ekwensi, is one such woman; she lives well, being provided for by a series of lovers. Jagua loves one man, Freddie, but he is young and only a student, so when three men come to see her Freddie knows what it is all about.

> Living in Lagos had taught him that this was the way it worked. The men came to a woman like Jagua, in the daytime, socially. Then individually they sneaked back at night or in the morning when the office-workers were pouring over their files beneath waving overhead fans. At such times they drank beer and paid for the "love" they bought....
>
> It did not once occur to him that he had no right to be resentful, that as a poor teacher he could not even begin to think of buying Jagua half the luxuries with which these men pampered her. But that did not ease the pain. In a city where money was the idol of the women, an idol worshipped in every waking and sleeping moment, sentiment was a mere pastime. And to Jagua, Freddie classified as sentiment. 15

There is a similar connection made between the high cost of city life and relying on boyfriends to pay one's way in Ama Ata Aidoo's short story, "Two Sisters." In this case it is a secretary, Mercy, who is having a loveless affair with an important government official, a man with many wives and girlfriends. Her sister, Connie, is shocked but Connie's husband looks at it in this light:

> She is not ruined. Since every other girl she knows has ruined herself prosperously, why shouldn't she? Just forget for once that you are a teacher....Every morning her friends who don't earn any more than she does wear new dresses, shoes, wigs and what-have-you to work. What would you have her do? ... In fact, encourage her...And maybe he would even agree to get us a new car from abroad. 16

TEACHER'S NOTE: You may want to discuss the effect of western ideals of beauty on the new standards the urban woman has set for herself by picking up on the line, "her new friends wear new dresses, shoes, wigs." Use the section on ideals of feminine beauty under Personal Power (p. 169).

Women's Education Lags Behind Men's: For many women, education remains an unfilled objective. In 1972, the Federal Commission for Education admitted that "although there was a great leap forward in education since independence, no significant advance was made in the field of women's education."[17] At all levels there are more boys than girls being educated, but the ratio of girls to boys is particularly low at the secondary level. Ninety percent of the girls who begin secondary school leave.[18]

The sources of this low female participation in education are only partly accounted for by traditional African attitudes about women's work. Formal education was brought to Africa by the Moslem religion and by Christian missionaries and in both cases the academic training of women was not a primary goal. Although Islam stresses scholarship and many Moslem schools were established in Nigeria, education was not available for women because Moslem society defines a limited domestic role for women. Today, a significant number of Moslem girls in the north are kept from contacts beyond the home and are educated solely by their mothers, who themselves are not literate.

Christian missionaries brought with them the 19th century British view that women needed only domestic skills. Europeans objected to matrilineal customs. Their emphasis was on the Biblical teachings in which all authority comes from "God the Father."[19] The missionaries trained only boys to serve the needs of the changing economic and political structure.

COMPARISON: The traditional hostility in most parts of the world toward educating girls dies out slowly.

> *Even in Communist China, by 1958 only 23% of the young women were receiving a higher education. In Latin America, however, girls have been educated along with the boys.*

For boys, then, education became all important; it clearly meant a step up the economic and social ladder. It became one way to achieve the social status of a "big man." This is reflected in Jagua Nana when Freddie says he must study hard "so I kin pass all de exams and become a man."[20]

Professional Opportunities for Women: Education for women is slowly becoming a high priority in Africa, and husbands, as well as the government, see that with education women will better be able to share in the financial burdens of the family. Towns offer good opportunities for women who do have education. African women usually have not had to fight the battles of unequal pay and job barriers that women in the West have fought. Since independence, the push for modernization has meant that women have been encouraged to work for the growth of the relatively new nation and professional jobs are available to those trained for them. Women are lawyers, teachers (mainly primary) and nurses. (Nursing has a higher status in Africa than in industrialized countries, which may partly account for the large number of male as well as female nurses.)

> *COMPARISON: Compare the situation for African women in the professions with that of women in modern China.*

Marriage and childbirth do not prevent professional women from working because labor is so cheap women can usually get help. Often young female kin are sent to help the working mother with childcare.

But even though a city like Lagos may have the largest proportion of women in professional categories, the number of women actually in these professions is very small. In 1969 only 15 percent of Nigerian women were found among the professional, technical and related workers. Only seven percent were administrative, executive and managerial workers.[21]

DISCUSSION:

If you were an uneducated woman or man, what kinds of work could you do?

If you were an educated woman or man, what kinds of work could you do?

Do educated men have more occupational choices than educated women in the U.S?

In America, too, girls have been socialized and educated to seek a limited number of occupational options. However, today the barriers to education for jobs that were considered "male only" in America are being broken down. Do you think women will choose formerly male occupations in significant numbers or do you think women will continue to avoid non-traditional work options? What would it take to get women to choose these jobs? What new jobs are now open to men? Are men entering them in significant numbers?

In addition to educational practices, African sex-role traditions serve to keep girls out of school. Many young girls must help their mothers at home and at their farms or businesses. Boys are freed to study. As a result, when the time comes to pass the tough exams necessary to move upward educationally, girls don't do as well. In the student reading selection, "Growing Up In Nigeria," a young woman describes her schooling in a system dedicated mainly to the education of males:

> ...At times teachers would walk round the class with the sticks in their hands. Although they might not mean to flog anybody, the sight of the cane made every girl shrink back. There was not a single female teacher in the school. There was no girls' school near our town...As a result of frequent flogging and mockery some of us became so nervous and timid that they started to lag behind in their lessons.
>
> ...One of the probationary teachers was not pleased with my leading the class in the weekly

> results. He called the boys in my class together and he advised them to come to study in his house every day. He was so serious at coaching them till late at night that they were all sleeping in his house.
>
> ...Five of us (girls) started schooling together according to the decisions of our mothers. We went on together like that for some years but gradually we were in different classes according to individual ability. One of us was stopped when she got to Standard I because her grandmother was getting old and so her mother withdrew her from school to stay at home with her grandmother and help her. After she had lived with the grannie for some years she had a petty trade of her own, selling cooked food to earn the money for clothes and other adornments. A few months later, another girl's mother gave birth to twins and that girl, too, had to stay home to help with the children and do other domestic duties. At the end of the year when we were promoted to higher classes, one of the three of us was withdrawn because her mother could not pay the school fees, buy equipment and school books. Really, it was not easy for a woman to train her daughter single-handed in a primary school with her very scanty resources and the difficulty of earning money in those days when one shilling was worth a pound of today. There were only two of us left and we pushed on together until she got to Standard III before she was persuaded by bad company, the sisters who had left before her, and that was the end of her education. I cannot describe how very sad I was. I nearly gave up learning too, but my mother, though an illiterate, was forcing me to go daily, saying that she would make me enjoy a better life than had been hers. She often advised me to watch the lives of the few literate people we had then, and often urged me to try to emulate them. I owe a great debt of gratitude first to the Lord who gave me such an intelligent woman for a mother who managed, although with difficulty, to give me the opportunity to learn. 22

Many Africans feel that with finances sparse, money is better spent on the boys. In Efuru, by Flora Nwapa, Gilbert questions his friend Sunday about sending his sister Nkoyeni to school:

> "It is a good thing you are sending her to school. But it is a waste sending them to school you know."

"I don't understand," Sunday said in surprise.

"Well, I mean really that boys should be given preference if it comes to that. If you had a little brother for instance and there is just enough money for the training of one, you wouldn't train Nkoyeni and leave the boy."

"You are right."

"Sometimes these girls disappoint one, you know?"

"How?" asked Sunday.

"They get married before the end of their training and the money is wasted."

"You are right. But it is the fault of us men. We should allow them to finish their schooling."

"And where does it all end? In the kitchen," Gilbert answered his own question.

"It does not always end in the kitchen, when the girl is allowed to finish, she can teach and thus bring money in that way." 23

PERSONAL POWER

Focus Questions:

In looking at continuities and changes in the personal power of African women, notice whether they have gained more control over

- *the use of their bodies;*
- *the people to whom they relate;*
- *the decision to marry or not to marry;*
- *whom they marry;*
- *the decision to have children;*
- *how many children to have;*
- *the decision to divorce;*
- *where they live;*
- *how society views the changes in their lives.*

In what actions does a woman have more choices?

In what actions does a woman have fewer choices?

In what actions does a woman have more power?

In what actions does a woman have less power?

In what actions has she kept the same amount of power?

Women Look for New Lifestyles: The growth of cities and new work options opened up the possibility of new mobility and new lifestyles for women as well as men. The women who migrated to towns, like the men, often wanted to improve their status. Others speak of a desire for "freedom," "emancipation" or the desire to find a husband or exciting new work. In Jagua Nana, Jagua recalls the effect that the idea of going to Lagos, Nigeria's capital, had on her at a time she was unhappy with her marriage and village life.

> A young man smilingly told her when the next train would be leaving for L-A-G-O-S. Lagos! A magic name. She had heard of Lagos where the girls were glossy, worked in offices like the men, danced, smoked, wore high-heeled shoes and narrow slacks, and were "free" and "fast" with their favours. She had heard that the people in Lagos did not have to go to bed at eight o'clock. Anyone who cared could go roaming the streets or wandering from one night spot to the other right up till morning. The night spots never shut, and they were open all night and every night; not like "here" where at 8 p.m. (latest) everywhere was shut down and the streets deserted, so that it looked odd to be wandering about. 24

Once in the cities, women experience great changes. The strong support of a woman's kinship group is greatly lessened, even if she travels back and forth between the town and her village. In the city, she is essentially alone, and she has an independence that would be unheard of in old Africa. She has opportunities to make many independent decisions about what she wants and needs in life.

Also, western ideals of marriage and relationships have weakened the ties the urban woman had with kinship groups and have resulted in her seeking new groups. Women's organizations, charitable groups, friends from work all take on a new importance, as they replace the support once gotten from the family.

At the same time, the pull of traditional life and the pull of modern, westernized life often created internal conflicts.

Most women and men do not sever their family ties completely. They maintain their families by sending money home; educated older children, including women, are almost always expected to give some of the money they earn toward the education of a younger sibling. It is also not unusual for family members to arrive and spend considerable time with their urban relatives.

Psychologically, women in the cities may feel acutely out of place in the cities. In his novel Iska, the prestigious author Cyprian Ekwensi describes a seemingly hard-bitten city-girl in this way:

> Remi had a philosophy that any girl who lives alone in Lagos must have at least one serious illness a year. This is God's way of reminding single girls that they are not as independent as they think...Modern living may have enabled them to isolate themselves from father, mother, brother, sister, fiance, husband and village community, but the umbilical cord has not been severed. 25

DISCUSSION:

Can students relate this situation to the life of a single woman alone in a city in America today?

Pressure on Women to Assume Western Ways: In the cities, a woman finds that not only western ways but also western possessions can bring her status and respect. She risks being considered provincial if she cannot get some luxury items. However, she may have to get a man to buy them for her (see quote from "Two Sisters," p. 132 , Economic Power section). She may also need a man for protection. Once a woman is in the city it is understood that she may live singly or with a man outside of marriage; in this, one finds the most striking contrasts between African women in towns and in rural areas.

The pressure to assume western ways is hard on rural and uneducated women. A man, educated, and achieving status from his job in the new economy, may be embarrassed by his less-educated girlfriend or wife. In the play The Lion and the Jewel by Wole Soyinka,[26] the boyfriend becomes totally frustrated by his girlfriend Sidi's traditional ways. He wearily says to her that she is and will always be an "uncivilized and primitive bush-girl," while he is courting her in "the way of civilized romance." The uneducated woman suddenly finds herself running an up-to-date home and having social duties she is not trained for. When social functions occur, this wife is apt to be left at home by her husband in favor of the independent, urban woman.

Women Criticized for Becoming Western: Yet, even though on one level, a woman is encouraged to join the modern scene, she may be strongly criticized for doing just this. She is seen by many people as having too easy a life, and is accused of liking a good time, of no longer showing respect to her relatives, of being a "fortune-seeker" or prostitute.[27] In the short story "Road to Mara" by Tom Chacha, the older people on a bus discuss a young woman, Bena, who is traveling with them to the town of Mara. This is Bena's first trip to town; she is going to look for her boyfriend who left the village months earlier.

> "This is one of those spoilt modern girls," the old man seemed to be saying. "She's probably going to be a common prostitute in the town."
>
> The woman looked at Bena with a mixture of pity and embarrassment. To her, Bena was a symbol of shame to all respectable women. ...She did not have the tribal markings on her face. Bena did not wear the iron rings on her neck. Instead she had a cross. On her arms, the tribal multi-coloured beads were replaced by a small gold watch.
>
> "The town is ruining our young girls," the woman whispered into the ear of the old man. [28]

Underlying these stereotypes about the "modern woman" is the idea that hard work will keep women "in line." Part of the mistrust of the urban woman comes from the rural African who does not fully understand urban conditions. The work of receptionists, file clerks, even factory laborers is seen as unproductive.

Educated women, who are granted a special status in Africa and are allowed special freedoms associated with their class, may also find themselves chastised for having too easily assimilated western ways. If a successful woman exercises new assertiveness, she appears to have usurped men's roles. Since she is in a position to earn as much money as a man and sometimes occupy posts of authority over men, uneducated relatives may chide her and her husband.

Educated African women today are aware that standards are applied differently to their behavior than to a male's. They tend to be blamed for societal problems such as juvenile delinquency, venereal disease, divorce, unwed motherhood. In short, they find that men who make personal changes in new Africa are more readily accepted than women.

DISCUSSION:

Take any one of the concepts mentioned in the last paragraph (i.e., when a woman becomes assertive in business it is felt that she is taking on a man's role), and have students relate this to society's feelings about the new roles for women in America. Students might break into two groups with one group supporting the thesis, the other opposing it.

In the last decade, women in America took on new roles. Those who worked outside the home sometimes have been blamed for the general "breakdown" of family life. Have students discuss their feelings about such accusations.

Romantic Marriages Are Problematic: As men and women absorbed the western ideas of romantic love and marriage, the selection of a marriage partner became a matter of personal choice. Only in parts of northern Nigeria are women still betrothed. But, many people do still take the advice of their parents into account. Parents often want their children to marry within their tribe and still attempt to arrange a marriage that will be a union between two lineal families.

The new, romantic view of marriage has caused problems. Many such marriages in Africa today are troubled.[29] The difficulty in part lies in the fact that few models exist for this type of marriage. After marriage, many men, and to some extent women, assume the traditional ways. For example, men may take "outside" wives -- mistresses with whom they have children and separate households. It is considered "manly" to father many children; a "big man," one with some status, is expected to have girlfriends and children outside marriage. A wife who resents the money spent on an "outside" wife may take a lover, but usually her action must be more discreet than her husband's. Leisure time, particularly the man's, is often spent away from the home, and both men and women tend to have more in common with their friends than with each other. There is simply not much time given to maintaining a western version of marriage and the nuclear family.

DISCUSSION:

Is the marital situation described here very different from that in some American homes? See if students can bring in selections from books, magazines or situations they observed on television that highlight the circumstances spelled out in their response to this question.

Was Arranged Marriage Better for Women? It may be said that the old system of arranged marriages created closer male/female relationships. In some tribes, a girl was "tried out" at a very young age; that is, she lived with her in-laws and her husband-to-be knew her for years before they were married. They might even have become good friends. Certainly modern women have more anxiety than they once did because present family structures do not give them the security of traditional life.

The concept of monogamy is also a western import. Partly because of the strong insistence of Christian missionaries, marriage performed under the civil code cannot be polygamous. Polygamous marriages do exist, though, in Nigeria and most African countries. In an urban setting, however, the compounds necessary for polygamous marriages are difficult to arrange, and most government-built housing is structured for nuclear families. In any case, when they are away from their tribe, women and men tend to live more like a nuclear family. This means that husbands and wives are joint decision-makers to a greater extent than before, even though relatives may be living with them.

The educated woman is apt to want a fairly egalitarian and monogamous marriage, more equal division in inheritance, shared household duties and a say in the number of children she will have. She represents the new African woman who wishes a voice in decisions of her family and community -- a voice based on her capabilities rather than on her traditional assigned status.

Some urban women see the western nuclear family structure as too individualistic. One expression of this feeling, reinforced by nationalistic sentiments against anything European, has been the reassertion in Africa of the value of polygamy.

Divorce is relatively easy to obtain in both civil and traditional marriages, and women in Nigeria initiate divorce more often than men. The children generally stay with the mother, in spite of the customary law which gives them to the father.[30]

Clearly, there are many complexities about marriage and male/female relationships that women have to handle. This is vividly seen in the case of Mary from Ghana, a nation with an urban environment similar to Nigeria's.

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

In Mary's story, notice the following departures from traditional marriage: 1) Mary "marries" for love; 2) Mary marries outside her tribe; 3) Her marriage follows years of living with her husband (note also the reading selection, "A Truly Married Women," by Abioseh Nicol in Fragments from a Lost Diary); 4) The father had to give up all his wives but one; and, 5) The father finally chooses the educated wife. The ways Mary gets her sources of income partly reflect the differing kinds of relationships she has with men.

Mary's father, an educated man, has three uneducated wives whom he formally divorced on his subsequent Ordinance marriage (civil marriage required by law in Ghana) to an educated girl. Mary, whose own mother was one of the uneducated wives, lived with her father while attending school but on leaving she joined her mother in order to help her business as a petty trader. When Mary reached the age of 18 an offer of marriage was made for her by a non-Ghanaian West African, but her father rejected it. Mary, nevertheless, had intercourse with the man, became pregnant and decided against her parents' wishes to live with him. She resided with him and she and her child rejoined him after he had returned to his own country. They remained together for over a year but during this time Mary complained in letters to her mother about her consort's neglect of her and of his association with other women. A second child had arrived in the meantime, but, fearing a possible visit from Mary's mother, the man sent Mary and the children back to Ghana. There, she obtained a well-paid office job, made "friendship" with one of her work associations, a Ga (a tribal group in Ghana) like herself, and became pregnant by him. Though there was no marriage contract Mary and he lived together; but after a short time she returned to her mother's home.

Later on, Mary met another Ga who wished to marry under native law, a proposal that did not appeal to her. The man's customary presents (the marriage payments), however, were accepted by Mary's parents and so she went to live with him, there being two children of this union. Mary

> continued to ask her husband for an Ordinance marriage and after ten years of married life he agreed. Mary wore the white bridal attire and had a typically expensive wedding.
>
> The husband's work takes him to remote parts of the country for long periods of time, and he often has to reside in a tent or a village hut. During the early part of their life together Mary travelled about with him but did not enjoy these rural experiences. After some years, therefore, she decided to settle in her native town with the children, leaving her husband to trek about the country on his own and only seeing him during his biennial leave.
>
> Mary assists her mother and her mother's mother when they are in financial need because she has now four sources of income. These include, in addition to a monthly remittance from her husband, profits from petty trading and from property and money inherited from her father. Also, she receives material benefits from occasional sexual services to men other than her husband. 31

Despite the difficulties surrounding the transition from arranged to romantic marriages, marriage itself in any form is highly valued. At least one marriage is the normal state for almost all women.[32] Child-bearing remains the main goal of marriage. Even with birth control, three to four children are considered a small family. But, in fact, according to African standards, urban women have large families. In a monogamous family, the woman tends to have more children than the women in a polygamous situation, and this, of course, may add a real burden to women who work outside the home.

A childless couple is still put under tremendous pressure by families to dissolve the marriage, and the man is expected to take another wife. A barren wife might find that without consulting her, her husband's mother has found another woman for him and set this woman up in a new household.

In a story by Flora Nwapa, "The Child Thief," Agnes, educated in England, cannot conceive after ten years of marriage. In the excerpt below, she runs into an older university friend, Bisi, who remains attractive and full of life. Bisi is horrified to see how Agnes has neglected herself and has lost the spark of her school days. Agnes tells Bisi about the happenings of her last years.

> "We came to Lagos three years ago. We were in Zaria. You know I was engaged in my final year at school. As soon as I took my School Certificate, I got married, and we went to Zaria. Three years ago we came here. I have not liked it here at all. I'll like to go back to Zaria or somewhere else, not here." "But it is so nice here," Bisi said. "And now that I know you are here, I'll be paying you visits, and you, you must come and see me. I live at Ikoyi, in a flat with my sister. Come any time you like. Or better still, you tell me where you live, I shall come and collect you. Has your husband a car?" Before Bisi finished, she was already aware of the tactlessness of the question. Agnes smiled. Her husband had a car, but since they arrived in Lagos, she had never been inside it. It was different at Zaria. Her husband took her to places when they were in Zaria. But now, he scarcely remembered that she was there.
>
> "You are not married then," Agnes asked. Bisi shook her head. "Not yet," she said smiling. "Let's have more coffee." "Yes," Agnes said. Bisi went to the desk to order more cups of coffee. Agnes watched her as she went. She envied her. She was still not married, as beautiful as she was. Don't men see her? Doesn't she appeal to them?
>
> She came back. "I am delighted to see you today," Agnes said. "You don't know it, but this is the only time for a long time that I have actually relaxed. My husband goes to work early and comes home late. By the time he finishes eating, and is ready to go out again, I am already sleepy."
>
> "And ready to go out again? Don't you go out with him?" Bisi asked. "Out with him? With my husband? Of course I don't. What for?" "Oh, you are one of those domesticated females whose place is in the home, mending socks and looking after the children." "I have no child, Bisi."
>
> "You have no child?" Bisi asked in a whisper. Agnes shook her head. "I have gone everywhere. I cannot recount how many 'D and C's' I have had, how many operations. I have never been pregnant, not to talk of abortions. It is my luck. My mother had seven children. Her own mother had nine. I don't see how I should not have even one. Let me be pregnant, and let it be noised that I am pregnant. I don't mind miscarrying it afterwards."

> "Have you tried Dr....?" Agnes smiled sadly. "I have tried him. I tell you, I have gone everywhere. My mother came the other day and said we should go to a native doctor, a few miles from Lagos. I don't want to go."
>
> "Why? You should go if your mother suggested it."
>
> "I am tired of going places. I don't want to go anywhere any more. I have a feeling that one day, they would give me something that will kill me."
>
> "No, don't say that."

The helplessness of Agnes's situation continues when her husband's family forces him to turn Agnes out of the house and install in her place his arranged wife and his two children. Agnes, believing that "she could not be happy unless she had a child" and that "her husband would treat her better if she had a child for him," fakes a pregnancy, manages a period of confinement at the hospital, and finding that "her husband now wanted and needed her," steals a baby to take home as hers. In the celebration that follows, their friends drink to them and tell Agnes, "There is hope for every woman."

When the police finally come to get Agnes and the baby, she is willing to go but simply asks them:

> "You are married, and you, you are married too."
>
> "Yes," the two men were compelled to answer.
>
> "And your wives have children."
>
> "Yes," the two men replied.
>
> "Well, I have been married for over ten years. This is my first baby. If you want to take it, you have to take me as well." 33

Woman Is Still Core of Family: In both farms and cities, the Nigerian woman remains the core of her family. For her adult and married sons, both in Moslem and Christian societies, she is the main family tie. Men, more than women, seek out their mothers for support. Women, in turn, pray for the birth of a male rather than a female child. Remember that in African society it is a male's duty to take care of his mother.

Women Influenced by Western Ideals of Beauty: European and American ideals of beauty have strongly affected African women. In the cities, copying western looks and ways is seen as a mark of sophistication and worth. In the following selection from "Everything Counts" by Ama Ata Aidoo, the pervasive influence of western culture on what is thought beautiful is shown. A young woman has returned home after studying abroad for years. She has been told by her fellow compatriates about the extent to which Africans have "no confidence in themselves" as they attempt to look like Europeans. She doesn't believe her friends until she steps off the plane.

> Really, she had found it difficult to believe her eyes. How could she? From the air-stewardesses to the grade-three typists in the offices, every girl simply wore a wig. Not cut discreetly short and disguised to look like her own hair as she had tried to do with hers. But blatantly, aggressively, crudely. Most of them actually had masses of flowing curls falling on their shoulders. Or huge affairs piled on top of their heads.
>
> Even that was not the whole story. Suddenly, it seemed as if all the girls and women she knew and remembered as having smooth black skins had turned light-skinned. Not uniformly. Lord, people looked as though a terrible plague was sweeping through the land. A plague that made funny patchworks of faces and necks. 34

In Jagua Nana, Ekwensi also deals with the impact of western culture on Africans. For men, getting a European education and associating with westerners was an important step to power. But for Jagua, looking young and keeping her beauty was her guarantee of power in western terms. Remember that in old Africa, age, not youth, gave a woman power.

> She heard the clatter of Freddie's shoes as he hurried down the steps to his own room on the floor below. She waited for him to come up, and when he would not come she went on combing her hair. By an odd tilt of the mirror she saw, suddenly revealed, the crow's feet at the corners of her eyes and the tired dark rings beneath.
>
> "I done old," she sighed. "Sometimes I tink my Freddie he run from me because I done old. God 'ave mercy!" she sighed again.
>
> The sigh was a prayer to God to stay back the years and a challenge to herself to employ all the coquettish arts to help Him. She did not often remember that if her son had lived he would today be roughly as old as her lover.

> ...She knew Freddie deserved a good girl to marry him, raise his children and "shadow" him in all his ambitions. But Jagua was too much in love with him to make a reasonable exit. And she wanted Freddie as her husband because only a young man would still be strong enough to work and earn when she would be on the decline. Men would not be wanting her in six years' time, when -- even now -- girls of eighteen could be had. At forty-five, she had her figure and her tact to guide her. 35

TEACHER'S NOTE: At this time, you might want to have students recall the standards of beauty in traditional Africa.

Ekwensi also sees town beauty (westernized) and village beauty (African) as two separate standards for women. When Jagua takes a trip home from Lagos to her village of Ogabu, she sees the village and the roles of men and women in a new light.

> ...Jagua knew that the men thought only about the land and its products and the women helped them make the land more fruitful. So that her city ways became immediately incongruous. The film of her make-up on her skin acquired an ashen pallor. The women fixed their eyes on the painted eyebrows and one child called out in Ibo, "Mama. Her lips are running blood!...." Jagua heard another woman say, "She walks as if her bottom will drop off. I cannot understand what the girl has become." 36

Later, Jagua contrasts her role in city life with her role in village life.

> She was singing gently now and enjoying the very rare luxury of being free. This was what the city woman meant when she told her friends, "I am going home." No men ran after her in Ogabu, none of them imbued her with unnecessary importance. Here she was known, but known as someone who lived with them and grew up with them. She was not known as a glamourite, someone to be hungered after for sheer diversion. 37

Ekwensi's view that urban life corrupts the natural beauty of African women is also reflected in the viewpoint of a number of Africans who associate western cosmetics, clothes and lifestyle with the former colonial nations. They wish to reject these external forms of western influence. While this cultural nationalism is a healthy sign, often women, specifically urban women, more than men are singled out to be criticized for their adaptation of foreign ways. Women respond to this by noting that African men wear coats and ties, for example, and that women should be free to wear what pleases them.

One lovely sign of traditional Africa is the continuing use of color and pattern in the African dress. African fashions are noted throughout the world for their dramatic style.

COMPARISON: Contrast old and new African clothing with the clothes worn by Chinese women today.

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Have two students take turns reading aloud this excerpt from the Song of Lawino by Okot p'Bitek. Lawino belongs to the Acoli tribe of Uganda. Notice that in this case it is the husband who wants to westernize his wife via her hair style. To understand his viewpoint, students should recognize that different hair styles today, as they did in old Africa, may signify special social class or status.

Song of Lawino
A Lament by Okot p'Bitek

the graceful giraffe cannot become a monkey

My husband tells me
I have no ideas
Of modern beauty.
He says
I have stuck to old-fashioned hair styles.

He says
I am stupid and very backward,
That my hair style
Makes him sick
Because I am dirty.

It is true
I cannot do my hair
As white women do ...

Ask me what beauty is
To the Acoli
And I will tell you;
I will show it to you
If you give me a chance! ...

My mother taught me
Acoli hair fashions;
Which fits the kind
Of hair of the Acoli,
And the occasion ...

The hair of the Acoli
Is different from that of
the Arabs;
The Indians' hair
Resembles the tail of
the horse;
It is like sisal strings
And needs to be cut
with scissors.
It is black,
And is different from that
of white women.

A white woman's hair
Is soft like silk;
It is light
And brownish like
That of the brown monkey,
And is very different from
mine.
A black woman's hair
Is thick and curly ...

When the beautiful one
With whom I share my husband
Returns from cooking her hair
She resembles a chicken
That has fallen into a pond;
Her hair looks
Like the python's discarded
skin.

They cook their hair
With hot irons
And pull it hard
So that it may grow long.

Then they rope the hair
On wooden pens
Like a billy goat
Brought for the sacrifice
Struggling to free itself.

They fry their hair
In boiling oil
As if it were locusts,
And the hair sizzles
It cries aloud in sharp pain
As it is pulled and stretched.

And the vigorous and healthy
hair
Curly, springy and thick
That glistens in the
sunshine
Is left listless and dead
Like the elephant grass
Scorched brown by the fierce
February sun.
It lies lifeless
Like the sad and dying
banana leaves
On a hot and windless afternoon.

The beautiful woman
With whom I share my husband
Smears black shoe polish
On her hair
To blacken it
And to make it shine,
She washes her hair
With black ink;

But the thick undergrowth
Rejects the shoe polish
And the ink
And it remains untouched
Yellowish, greyish
Like the hair of the
grey monkey

I am proud of the hair
With which I was born
And as no white woman
Wishes to do her hair
Like mine,
Because she is proud
Of the hair with which
she was born,
I have no wish
To look like a white woman.

The Story of Lawino in its entirety shows that when aspects of another culture are imported disruptions result. Not only is Lawino asked to behave in ways that are foreign to her, she is also cut off from her husband's life.

DISCUSSION:

Where did the husband's opinions of what constituted "modern beauty" come from? (Western ideals; use students' responses to point out the socializing influences behind his opinion.)

Lawino's assertion of the value of her own beauty in spite of her husband's complaint reflects her sense of cultural integrity. How does she feel about the looks of Lawino's co-wife (that she becomes ugly when she tries to emulate the looks of a white woman.)

When a person chooses one way to look, s/he often puts down the ways others look. Does Lawino do that here? (Her point of view is that every race and culture has ways to look valuable to itself.)

COMPARISON: Compare the poem with Beah Richards's "I am a Black Woman" in the section on African-American Women: During Slavery and Jimcrow.

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

List the traditional role expectations that may influence present-day African women in their personal lives. Distinguish between urban and rural women.

List modern role expectations which may influence present-day African urban and rural women.

POLITICAL POWER

Focus Questions:

Do women participate equally with men in the political life of their nation?

Have there been changes in the society's political expectations of women?

Are there changes in the nature of women's political participation?

Identify:

- *Influences on women's political power.*
- *Spheres where the traditional political ways remain.*
- *Spheres where women have more political power.*
- *Spheres where women have less political power.*

Women Gain Vote After Independence: Although during the late 19th century, most of Africa was colonized, now most African nations are independent. Nigeria was granted independence from Britain in 1960 without experiencing the type of great military struggle that occurred in Kenya (Mau-Mau Rebellion) or, more recently, in Angola. Yet, in many African independent nations, civil wars, often emanating from disputes between tribal groups, followed independence. The bloody Biafran conflict has already been mentioned (see page 129). Women participated in most of these military conflicts in various capacities and gained the respect of the African men. Partly because of this participation, after Independence women were largely granted equal political status. Today, women have the vote and may be elected to political office.

Men Have Even Greater Political Power Now: "Giving" women the vote does not necessarily give them political power. Remember that traditionally in West Africa there were dual-sex systems: women and men had separate functions which were equally respected and this gave both men and women forms of power. The separate powers of the sexes included political roles. Now, one major change in African life is that these dual-sex systems have mostly given way to single-sex systems. The result is that men have most of the overt political power insofar as government is concerned. This may be seen in politics where men vote more than women do, are elected to office in much greater numbers and hold most of the important government posts. Women have relatively few arenas in which they exercise similar power.

DISCUSSION:

See if students can give examples of the move to the single-sex system in modern African women's economic and personal powers.

There are, however, some traditional sources of political power which women retain. The old ways of collective action by women are a more viable source of power for them than individualized action. Yet, there are changes, too, in the content and arena of women's collective political action. We shall first review the nature of their traditional power base.

Strong Group Action by Women: Women in pre-colonial Africa participated in village-wide gatherings and associations dedicated to asserting the concerns of women. During colonialism, these female institutions remained. For the Ibos, the village meetings came to be called mikiri or mitiri during colonialism and they, along with ogbo, age-set village meetings of women born in a village, continued to be a forum for women's complaints and a base for collective action.[39] Today, in some areas, women's age-group clubs or women's societies still function. In other areas, they no longer exist and nothing so powerful as this form of "sisterhood" has risen to replace them.

DISCUSSION:

Do students see any similar collective action forums for women in the U.S?

Do students belong to any same-sex group that has some political clout? Or do their parents? (Bridge clubs or bowling leagues would probably not have political influence unless they raise money to support certain groups or causes.)

In cities, women's political influence through group action is noticeably present. Sometimes these blocs are social organizations, sometimes unions; women acting in them together have constituted a significant political force. For example, when the agitation in 1948 of the Egba women's union against their chief led to the chief's abdication, the leading paper, West Africa, claimed, "Henceforth the ruler interested in his throne must count on the support of his feminine subjects."[40]

Women also band together in economic unions, such as the market women's associations, and lobby for political action to suit their needs. In 1923, the market women, as a group, became members of the new Nigerian National Democratic Party. In 1944, they entered the Women's Party, a political wing of the party formed by educated women. Jagua in Jagua Nana assessed the market women in this way when she went to address a campaign meeting before them:

> Jagua knew these women; astute, sure of themselves and completely independent and powerful. Their votes could easily sway the balance because they voted in bloc. Some of them had children studying in England and most of them had boys in the Secondary Schools. To them education was a real issue. 41

Other city-based women's associations indirectly influence political change by holding national conferences, or by writing reports on concerns such as marriage, divorce, and education. Some associations disseminate modern skills and ideas by operating private schools, day nurseries and training establishments. They agitate for government subsidies by organizing pressure groups. In response, the government tends to give them recognition and financial support.

The "Women's War": One particular group action by southeast Nigerian women stands out. Women acted against colonial rule in 1929 in a series of incidents known as the "Women's War" or the "Aba Riots." This "war" may seem removed from the concerns of the modern urban woman today, but it is important to see the strength of women's political action in the colonial period. That women's movement is considered by some to have been more wide-ranging in its concerns than today's movement in that it dealt with both women's and national issues. In any case, the "Women's War" shows that women in Africa did not react with inertia to the weakening of their political power during colonialism.

The impetus for this revolt of Ibo and Ibibio women was a rumor that the colonial government planned to tax women as it had done with men. Underlying women's fear was their awareness that the political structure the British imposed on Southeast Nigeria had little to do with the decentralized nature of Ibo society and had effectively removed the avenues to Ibo participation in the political decision-making process.

The British had set up native courts composed of large conglomerations of unrelated social groupings. Each village sent a "representative" who was given a "warrant" of office and called a warrant chief. Of course, the British took no account of the women's mikiri and women could not make their needs known through that one male "representative." Thus, suspicion and anger against British control was already present when in 1929 there was a decision to count women and their property. This raised women's fears that they were to be taxed, and they responded with a series of mass demonstrations which took firm police discipline to end.

A number of things about these riots surprised Europeans and even the local men. One was the vehemence of the women. One witness said:

> I am an old man, and have been a chief for a long time ... In all my life I never saw the women carrying on in this fashion before. I never saw the women flinging sand at their chiefs or white men or attacking them with sticks... 42

Other impressive elements were the women's solidarity and their rapid communication between village groups. As Sylvia Leith-Ross puts it, "Among the women, there seems to be something -- perhaps merely the bond of sex -- that links them up over wide areas so that a woman's call to women would echo far beyond the boundaries of her own town."[43]

The disturbances continued sporadically in some areas into the early 1930's. The issue of taxation was quickly resolved when the British did not tax women. But then new actions were taken by women. They demanded to be appointed to the native courts, that a woman be made a district officer, and that white men "go to their own country."[44] These demands were ignored. Further, shortly after the riots, the native court administration took over many more village functions and women had less voice than before. In fact, the British attacked the mikiri by claiming that they engaged in rituals that were non-Christian.

Women have protested, too, against other issues besides the law of the colonialists. We already know of the nature and extent of the market women's demonstrations. Women protested strongly against the deterioration of women's status as farmers; in 1959, the women in the Kon region of Nigeria (Eastern Fulani people) created major upheavals to protest their fear of losing their land to male farmers.[45]

Women Gain New Power Through Independence Movements: Political participation by women in the struggle for independence from colonial rule granted them added respect in the eyes of men. For this reason, there was little male opposition to enfranchising women after independence. Only in northern Nigeria were Moslem women told that they could not take part in voting for religious reasons.

In Nigeria, many women also put their lives on the line during the Biafran military struggle. This, too, raised their esteem in the eyes of men. Chinua Achebe, in Girls at War, writes about the reaction of Reginal Nwankwo to seeing women in the military.

> That was the day he finally believed that there might be something in this talk about revolution. He had seen plenty of girls and women marching and demonstrating before now. But somehow he had never been able to give it much thought. He didn't doubt that the girls and the women took themselves seriously; they obviously did. But so did the little kids who marched up and down the streets at the time drilling with sticks and wearing their mothers' soup bowls for steel helmets. The prime joke at the time among his friends was the contingent of girls from a local secondary school marching behind a banner: WE ARE IMPREGNABLE!

> But after that encounter at the Awka checkpoint he simply could not sneer at the girls again, nor at the talk of revolution, for he had seen it in action in that young woman whose devotion had simply and without self-righteousness convicted him of gross levity. What were her words? We are doing the work you asked us to do. 46

In terms of what is written into law, African nations such as Nigeria are ahead of the United States in women's rights. In fact, there was relatively little struggle on the part of women to get their legal rights in Africa; men "granted" them because they saw the upgrading of women's status as a necessary step to stimulate the progress of the newly independent nations.

COMPARISON: (1) Similarly, women and men in modern China are unified in revolutionary struggle against the old feudal order in regard to women's rights. (2) Women and men in the United States are more divided on the issue of women's rights because of the absence of an external "foe" and because much of the government is male-controlled and desirous of maintaining the social order.

The following account called "The Resistance of Women" from Ousmane Sembene's novel God's Bits of Wood is a strongly moving account of African women in Senegal who waged a political protest on behalf of both sexes against the French colonial regime.

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

In "The Resistance of Women," describe:

- *the events behind the political action of the Senegalese women.*
- *the non-traditional mode of political power exercised by the women.*
- *the combined impact of their protest and the men's strike against the French.*

Senegal is on the West Coast of Africa, to the north of Nigeria. During its period of colonial rule, Senegal was under French domination. The experiences of the Senegalese in resisting French control are similar to anti-colonial struggles throughout Africa.

Ousmane Sembene was born in 1923 in Senegal into a family of fisherfolk. In the following selection, he writes of the time when the women of the town of Thies discovered that the French, in retaliation for a railway strike by the men of the town, had shut off the only water fountain. The women are stunned by this act. At last one of them, Ramatoulaye, confronts the French policemen who are standing guard.

> In the days before the strike the trip to the fountain for water had been the occasion for an exchange of all kinds of gossip, for the spreading of news, and even for arguments; but now there was only a gloomy silence, a stillness that was a reflection of impatience worn down by fatigue. There was also a sullen kind of fear, mingled with hatred of this instrument the white men could shut off whenever they wished. The whole system belonged to them, from the water-purification plant through the labyrinth of pipes to the faucet on the fountain itself. ...In the silence that ensued, a confused rumbling could be heard in the streets. The officer, sensing Ramatoulaye's defiance, looking into the hatred that flamed in her eyes, began to grow angry himself. The women were on the verge of panic. They scarcely recognized the woman beside them as the Ramatoulaye they had always known, and they asked themselves where she had found this new strength. She had always been quiet and unassuming and gentle with the children; at the street fountain she never took part in the arguments, and she never spoke badly of her neighbors. Where, then, had this violence been born? What was the source of this energy so suddenly unleashed? It was not the war; Ramatoulaye was not a man and knew nothing of the rancors that well up in soldiers on the march. It was not the factory; she had never been subject to the inhuman dictatorship of machines. It was not even in the too frequent association of men; she had known only those of her own family. Where, then? The answer was as simple as the woman herself. It had been born beside a cold fireplace, in an empty kitchen.

> She took a step toward the white officer.
>
> "Go away now," she said in French. "This is a house for us, not a house for white men."
>
> ...On all sides of her the other women began brandishing bottles filled with sand, flatirons, and clubs of all shapes and sizes. In a few minutes the group of policemen was completely encircled.
>
> The interpreter tried to say something, but Ramatoulaye would not let him speak. "I have nothing more to say to you. It's only because of the toubab* that you haven't yet been struck down."
>
> In the street, however, the reinforcements the officer had sent for had arrived -- more policemen, and soldiers with them. And it was in the street that the battle between the women and the police began, though no one knew exactly how.

Later, the women decide to actively support the railway strikers by forming a demonstration march to Dakar, the capital of Senegal.

> It was Penda who addressed them, hesitantly at first, but gathering assurance as she spoke.
>
> "I speak in the name of all of the women, but I am just the voice they have chosen to tell you what they have decided to do. Yesterday we all laughed together, men and women, and today we weep together, but for us women this strike still means the possibility of a better life tomorrow. We owe it to ourselves to hold up our heads and not to give in now. So we have decided that tomorrow we will march together to Dakar."
>
> For a moment Penda's voice was lost in a confused murmuring that linked astonishment and misgiving, and then she spoke again, more firmly.
>
> "Yes -- we will go together to Dakar to hear what these toubabs have to say and to let them see if we are concubines! Men, you must allow your wives to come with us! Every woman here who is capable of walking should be with us tomorrow!"
>
> Again there was murmuring and shouting, and some applause, but there were also cries of remonstrance and protest. Bakayoko took Penda by the arm.
>
> "Come to the union office with us," he said. "Your idea is good, but you can't start on something like this without thinking it over carefully."

---

* Toubab: white men

> As they crossed the square, through the gradually scattering crowd, they passed dozens of little groups discussing this new development. It was the first time in living memory that a woman had spoken in public in Thies, and even the onslaught of night could not still the arguments.

The men are uncertain about the turn of events, but are powerless to stop the women's march. Meeting in two places, the women start off.

> At last, toward two o'clock in the morning, when a few venturesome stars had succeeded in stabbing through the obscurity, the two groups came together. A cloud of white dust, pushed up and out by a lazy wind, rose to the sky and a meeting with the darkness.
>
> "Now we are leaving!" Penda cried.
>
> Like so many echoes, hundreds of voices assured her. "Now we are leaving . . . leaving . . . leaving . . ."
>
> Preceded, accompanied, and followed by the beating of the drums, the cortege moved out into the night.
>
> In the last miles before they reached their goal they passed a point from which they could see the island of Goree, a tiny black dot in the green expanse of the ocean. As they approached the first buildings of Dakar's suburbs, a breathless boy on a bicycle raced up to meet them, leaping off his machine in front of the little group at the head of the column.
>
> "There are soldiers on the road at the entrance to the city," he gasped. "They say that the women from Thies will not be allowed to pass."
>
> The laughter and the singing stopped abruptly, and there was silence. A few of the women left the road and took shelter behind the walls, as if they expected the soldiers to appear at any minute; but the bulk of the column stood firm. Penda climbed up on a little slope.
>
> "The soldiers can't eat us!" she cried. "They can't even kill us; there are too many of us! Don't be afraid -- our friends are waiting in Dakar! We'll go on!"
>
> The long multicolored mass began to move forward again.
>
> Just outside the big racecourse of the city, the column confronted the red tarbooshes of the soldiers. A black non-commissioned officer who was standing with the captain commanding the little detachment called out to them.

"Go back to Thies, women! We cannot let you pass!"

"We will pass if we have to walk on the body of your mother!" Penda cried.

And already the pressure of this human wall was forcing the soldiers to draw back. Reinforcements began to appear, from everywhere at once, but they were not for the men in uniform. A few rifle butts came up menacingly and were beaten down by clubs and stones. The unnerved soldiers hesitated, not knowing what to do, and then some shots rang out, and in the column two people fell -- Penda and Samba Ndoulougou.

But how could a handful of men in red tarbooshes prevent this great river from rolling on to the sea?

"The marchers" came in through the suburb of Hann, across the bridge at the entrance to the city. The strikers who had been assigned to maintain order tried desperately to keep the crowd formed in a double rank along the sides of the street, so that they would have room to pass. The mingling of sound from this mass of people -- a drumming of thousands of heels, ringing of bicycle bells, creaking of cart wheels, shouting and singing, and the cries of cripples and beggars -- could be heard as far away as the docks. A vast echoing dome seemed to cover the entire city.

"Stop pushing! They're going to pass right by here; you'll see them!"

"Is it true they walked all that distance without food or water?"

"The poor things -- that's more than the men could do!"

"They're coming to see the deputy -- to arrange with him about the strike."

"If you ask me, the strike is a matter for the men to settle themselves."

"You're right there, brother -- this is nothing but politics. These women are all communists."

"But they aren't doing anything except trying to help their husbands."

"And where will that get them? It's just as Iman* says -- they don't know what they're doing. Look around you, woman -- there are soldiers everywhere. You wait and see; there's going to be trouble at the meeting. I know what

---

* Iman: Moslem religious leader

> I'm talking about; I work in their offices." ...This was the sort of thing everyone was saying as they waited for the women to arrive. The air was filled with curiosity, speculation, excitement and fear.
>
> A few minutes later a murmur of excitement rippled across the crowd, as the women of Thies came in through the main entrance gate. Their long journey together had been an effective training school; they marched in well-ordered ranks, ten abreast, and without any masculine escort now. They carried banners and pennants printed with slogans, some of them reading: EVEN BULLETS COULD NOT STOP US, and others, WE DEMAND FAMILY ALLOWANCES.
>
> Behind them came the mass of the strikers, led by the members of the committee. They, too, were carrying banners: FOR EQUAL WORK, EQUAL PAY -- OLD AGE PENSIONS -- PROPER HOUSING, and others. In spite of their brave appearance, no one could help noticing the fatigue and hunger in their faces and bodies.
>
> Outside the gates, the women of Dakar, with Ndeye Touti among them, were passing among the crowd, taking up a collection.
>
> "For the strikers ..."
>
> "To help the women of Thies return to their homes . . ."
>
> "For the children . . ."
>
> And small change and coins, and even a few bills, were dropped into the brightly colored scarves and aprons and handkerchiefs that were held out to receive them.
>
> The next morning a general strike was called. It lasted for ten days, the time required before pressure from all sides forced the management of the railroad to resume the discussions with the delegates of the strikers. 47

Women's Political Limitations: The reality for women, however, was that because they were not involved in the colonial administration, as were African-American men, and because they had limited education, they were not prepared to participate in the new nation's western-oriented political structure. Becoming soldiers was not the same as becoming familiar with new forms of political power. Thus, although in West Africa some women have risen to prominence in positions at the United Nations or in cabinet posts and a few women, in Nigeria in particular, have gone into law and government administration (see the Ms. Africa reading selection), most women have avoided these avenues to political power.

African women are not seeking any more rights on paper. They want a meaningful implementation of the ones they have. Since independence, male politicians have done little to push for women's participation in places where men predominate. In some cases, women's votes were courted to boost men into political power; these same men later ignored the special needs of women. Women have found they have to deal with "token" edicts professing to support women's rights -- such as the appointment of one woman to an important post. Many successful women talk about having to prove themselves in these positions and having to show that they are better than men.

DISCUSSION:

Can students relate this situation to the problems of racial bias, women's rights and "tokenism" in America?

African women, themselves, have partly perpetuated the problem. Many have been passive about asserting their rights or about trying for new posts. Their dilemma is an ironic one. If they assumed these rights, which are western in concept and still alien to many of them, African women, who have traditionally had their own spheres of political power would still have to function in a world that in western fashion is male-dominated. Thus, merely granting African women their rights is not an answer to the problem of upgrading their status.[48] One woman commented that African women could benefit from American-style consciousness-raising sessions. Another felt that it would have been better if women had had to struggle for their rights. In that way they would have become involved and learned the ropes of political participation in a western system.[49]

Education in itself often is the key which raises a woman's commitment to equal rights. In the film Fear Woman, the opinions of the high school girls in Ghana about their new roles in politics, work and at home reflect a new spirit of commitment in these areas. It must always be remembered that African women have long carved out their own spheres of power within the limitations placed on them by their societies.

Notes

[1] Austin Shelton, ed., The African assertion (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1968), p. 15.

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[47] Ousmane Sembene, "The Resistance of Women." In Cartey and Kilson, eds., *The Africa reader: independent Africa* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), pp. 90-98.

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[49] Ankiah, *Op*. *cit*., p. 27.

Student Learning Materials

Continuity and Change

Non-fiction

"The Aba women's rebellion," a mini-module for secondary level. New York: African-American Institute, School Services Division, n.d. 4 pp. Mimeograph. $0.35 from the publisher, 833 United Nations Plaza, New York 10017.

Easy to read analysis of the Aba riots, with a lesson plan. Good for a further look at this example of women's political power.

Cartey, Wilfred and Kilson, Martin, eds. The Africa reader: independent Africa. New York: Vintage Books, 1970. 429pp. Paper. $2.95.

Selections and extracts, most by black Africans, which articulate the African struggle for independence. Organically arranged in such a way as to give historical continuity and an ideological framework. Selected bibliography. For material on women, see that heading in the index.

- Sembene, Ousmane. "The resistance of women" (pp. 90-98).

  When the French in Senegal responded to a general strike by Senegalese men by turning off the community water supply, the woman organized a woman's march to Dakar. In spite of some male resistance ("the strike is a matter for men to settle themselves"), the women marched for days without food, carrying banners that read, "For Equal Work, Equal Pay," "We Demand Family Allowances," and "Even Bullets Could Not Stop Us."

  This is an excellent selection which parallels the Nigerian "Women's War" information.

- "The defiance of women in South Africa" (pp. 313-318).

  In August, 1956, women all over South Africa made arrangements for the care of their children, packed their suitcases, and went to Pretoria to meet and demonstrate against the new government requirement that women, like men, must now carry passes -- the hated "badges of slavery."

  This selection not only describes these protests but also chronicles the times black South African women have resisted political oppression during colonial rule.

Clark, Leon, ed. Through African eyes: cultures in change. New York: Praeger, 1971. 744pp. Hardcover. Out-of-print. Paper edition in 6 vols. $2.45 each. $12.50 set.

If using the separate paper edition titles, you will need the first two volumes. Our pagination is from the hardcover edition.

If you used parts one and two of Anna Apoko's "Growing up in Acholi," in the traditional section (pp. 8-39 of "Coming of age in Africa"), use part three for Continuity and Change. Excerpts from Okot p'Bitek's Song of Lawino, a book-length poem, are arranged in two parts (pp. 40-71) and tell of the conflict between old and new in an Acholi woman's life.

In "From tribe to town," students may enjoy the African equivalent of Dear Abby -- "Tell me, Josephine" (pp. 120-129). The introduction explains why almost all the letters are written by men. To Clark's suggested questions we might add: what do the men's letters tell us about women's place? "Marriage is a different matter" (pp. 130-138) is also written from the man's viewpoint.

All selections are easy reading. Introductory statements and discussion questions are excellent.

Crane, Louise. Ms. Africa: profiles of modern African women. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1973. 160pp. Hardcover. $6.95.

Biographical sketches of women who represent the educated elite. Relevant to our West African focus are: Annie Jiagge (pp. 13-35), Ghanaian Supreme Court judge and international figure; Efua Sutherland (pp. 36-56), Ghanaian poet, author, and theater director, who is particularly interested in African oral history; Angie Brooks (pp. 57-68), Liberian lawyer and first woman president of the United Nations General Assembly; and Irene Ighodaro (pp. 69-81), Sierra Leone/Nigerian doctor and feminist. Miriam Makeba (pp. 141-159) is a South African, but students may already know her and therefore want to read about her.

Easy reading, but not terribly exciting. Mentioned here mainly to provide balance for the large number of fiction selections. Look for personal and external influences on these women's lives, e.g., their educated families and their involvement in national liberation struggles.

"Growing up in Nigeria," African Women, 2:4 (1958), 73-78.

A young Nigerian teacher gives a picture of her relationships among the members of her polygamous family in Iboland in the 1930's. The selection is included because of the large section devoted to a description of her school experiences.

Leith-Ross, Sylvia. "Women of affairs." Journal of the Royal African Society, 37:149 (1938), 477-482.

This is a lively portrait of a session in the late 1930's between an Onitsha trader, Joanna, and the agent of a European cloth firm. In some ways the piece belongs in traditional Nigeria; yet the use of cash, the buying of goods from England and the scope of the traders' markets are all changes. Ms. Leith-Ross observes how Joanna conducts her business, and through her eyes we see a shrewd, clever woman who could be as successful as a fashion buyer for a large firm in the U.S. today as she was as a trader in Nigeria then.

"Life-styles of African women," a mini-module for secondary level. New York: African-American Institute, School Services Division, n.d. 8pp. Mimeograph. $0.35 from the publisher, address above.

Four short, easy-to-read oral histories of African women with different lifestyles. The first two are traditional; the last two are modern. A lesson plan, annotated bibliography and annotated filmography are included.

If you used the first two (traditional) oral histories before, use the last two now.

Marvin, Stephen. World study inquiry series: Africa. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969. 160pp. Paper. $2.25. Teacher's manual, $1.23.

Originally published in Palo Alto by Field Educational Publications, this series offers easy reading selections, both fiction and non-fiction, along with discussion questions, for junior and senior high school students.

- "Women's changing roles" (pp. 90-91).

Use this article in conjunction with the story, "Stupid girl!" annotated in the Fiction section, p.199. The article maintains that "in the old Africa, a woman knew what to do. In the new Africa she is confused." Are men also "confused"? Does this word have racist and/or sexist connotations? Other discussion questions for both the story and article on p. 92.

Fiction

Achebe, Chinua. Girls at war and other stories. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett World Premier Books, 1974. Paper. Out-of-print.

Most of the protagonists of the short stories in this collection are male; however, two selections focus on women.

- "The vengeful creditor" (pp. 51-73). Veronica longs to attend school but with a near-destitute widow-mother she must work as a housekeeper. Promised by her employers that they will send her to school when their baby is "big enough to go about on his own," Veronica becomes vengeful when she realizes that they did not really intend her to go. Read the selection for the view that economic change and educational choice are not options for all women in Nigeria.
- "Girls at war" (pp. 109-129). The narrator is a man full of self-righteousness about women who, in war time, engaged in sex and used the black market for personal gain. He laments the "terrible transformation" of the early devotion to the struggle for national independence for Biafra in a young militia woman, who he sees as part of a generation of women "rotten and maggotty at the center." The short story makes it clear, however, that he is just as guilty of personal survival tactics as are the women; ultimately the woman soldier proves more heroic and selfless than the narrator.

  The selection is included to show the extent of women's participation in this civil war plus the double standards they met as they moved into the male world.

Aidoo, Ama. No sweetness here. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1972. 166pp. Paper. $1.95.

This is a collection of short stories by one of Africa's most gifted young writers. Although set in Ghana, the stories describe town men and women in conflicts between the values of traditional society and new affluent city standards that is the same in Nigeria.

- "Everything counts" (pp. 1-8). A young woman, studying abroad, begins to wear a wig and is derided by her friends. When she returns home and sees everyone wearing not only wigs but bleaching their skin, she is struck by the extent to which African urban women have accepted the ideals of the West. She sees in others and in herself how beauty is a standard by which women judge themselves and others and how vulnerable African women are as they pattern themselves after the ideal of Western femininity.
- "No sweetness here" (pp. 69-92). Moami Ama, seeking a divorce from her husband, must give up her only, much-loved son. There are two change situations for her, however. (1) She feels for awhile that she has a chance to keep her son and (2) she raised him alone without help from her kinfolk. The setting is village life.

- "Two sisters" (pp. 107-126). Two sisters have different relationships with men. Connie is married, with children, and in love with her husband. He, however, has a string of girlfriends. Her younger sister, Mercy, wants to marry but will not settle for an unimportant man with little future. Mercy, then, has affairs with wealthy, often married, men. Connie is upset by her sister's actions, but with her husband's encouragement, accepts the gifts her sister's friends produce. Change indications in this selection are found in work situations, marriage, education, the new value of money, as well as in male/female relationships. This story is also found in Ms. Magazine.

Ekwensi, Cyprian. Jagua Nana. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Premier Books, 1969. 207pp. Paper. Out-of-print.

Jagua, the heroine of Jagua Nana, is known as the Nigerian Moll Flanders, and Jagua's exploits and sexual ease and humor do seem very close to those of Moll. Jagua's life as a "high life" woman give an invaluable picture of one side of life for some women in Nigerian cities. Already in her forties when we meet her, she is a woman with a large number of choices: should she marry someone with money and settle down, should she become an Onitsha trading princess and make money herself, should she continue her present life full of love for Freddie, younger than she and with an improbable future as a student, should she continue, too, her life which she loves, attracting men and dancing at the Tropicana Club?

Teachers could use Chapters 1-3 (pp. 5-16) for a homework reading selection because they give a feeling of Jagua's life and values. However, a reading of the entire novel gives an invaluable insight into women in cities.

Emecheta, Buchi. The bride price. New York: George Braziller, 1976. 168pp. Hardcover. $6.95.

This is a love story about a young Ibo girl, Aku-nna, and Chike, son of a prosperous former slave. Tribal customs forbid them to marry, and yet they do. Aku-nna's uncle refuses to accept the required bride price from Chike's family; Aku-nna later dies in childbirth, the fate which it is believed to befall every girl whose bride price is not paid.

The conflict for Aku-nna between tribal custom and her modern desires goes beyond her love affair, however. She was raised in Lagos in the 1940's and her problems only begin when she must return to her mother's village when her father dies. She is never really happy there with the village ways, never at ease expressing her educated, "Lagos" aspirations.

The author stresses the subservient roles of women -- how the sons are educated above the daughters, how girls fetch and carry, how males make decisions that control women's lives, how childbearing is thought of as a woman's sole source of achievement. Yet, there are a number of change indicators. For example, Aku-nna has a chance of being educated to become a teacher, her mother uses the money from her husband's gratuity to buy palm kernels to be reprocessed and made into soap in England, and Aku-nna does feel a romantic love for Chike.

Emecheta, Buchi. Second-class citizen. New York: George Braziller, 1975. 175pp. Hardcover. $6.95.

Alice Walker calls this novel "one of the most informative books about contemporary African life that I have read."

When Adah follows her student husband to England, she must adapt to a racist country. Surprisingly, she finds little support from her African neighbors. Most of them are not Ibos and resent, too, her education and modern views. With five small children and a weak husband to support, Adah decides to write a novel. Typically, the Ibo mother, she does this not only for herself, but also for the children.

The novel is heavily autobiographical. It covers the themes of conflict between traditional and modern African culture, of conflict between African and Western cultures, and of sexism. It compares to Fifth Chinese Daughter in the strife of young women to become educated and in other women's struggles within male-dominated societies.

"Hair," a mini-module for secondary level. New York: African-American Institute, School Services Division, n.d. 6pp. Mimeograph. $0.50 from the publisher, 833 United Nations Plaza, New York 10017.

An attractive cover with drawing of different African hair styles and a short poem, "There is love in the plaiting of hair/of the hair of the African girl," is followed by a brief excerpt from Okot p'Bitek's book length poem, Song of Lawino. An African wife plaintively resists her husband, who wants her to take on a modern hair style. The lesson plan asks: is the idea of beauty culture-bound or culture-free?

Katz, Naomi and Milton, Nancy, eds. Fragment from a lost diary and other stories: women of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975. 317pp. Paper. $3.95.

Anthology of Third World literature about women: 20 stories by men as well as women. Introduction briefly comments on each and its place in the book's three sections. "The women of the earlier part of the collection are to a large degree helpless victims of a social order and family structure which offers no possibility of a way out. For the women of the later stories, there are alternatives, but they are alternatives which bring with them new choices containing their own conflicts. So while this anthology opens with a presentation of some of the most painful problems facing women, it closes with some of the most difficult questions." (Introduction, xviii).

These selections are not from Nigeria, yet all three have good instances of change indicators.

- Nicol, Abioseh. "The truly married woman" (pp. 107-117). When Ayo changes her status from mistress to wife she demands more respect from her husband, Ajayi. In fact, Ayo has been showing signs of asserting herself in new spheres before the marriage. One sign was her challenge of Ajayi's method of disciplining their son -- an idea she picked up at her women's group. Ayo and Ajayi's living together for 12 years before marriage is also a changed situation.
- Mbilinyi, Marjorie. "A woman's life" (pp. 254-264). Mama Thecla has achieved professional respect in her community as a teacher. Yet she is still subjected to her husband's violent authority. The story also points out the husband's problems with his work, where Europeans get better treatment and those with money can bribe their way out of problems. His reaction to this job is partly responsible for his oppressive treatment of his wife. The assumption that a marriage made by choice and job status will automatically give women happiness is challenged in this story. Social and economic change may also bring new problems.
- Rive, Richard. "Resurrection" (pp. 265-274). This is a bitter reading about Mauvis who recalls at her mother's funeral, how her mother favored her white children and taught Mauvis who is black, to hide in the kitchen. Although it was written about South Africa, the selection speaks to the put-down of blacks by whites, in this case within a family. Mauvis's harsh confrontation with the fact of her unequal treatment may be seen as a sign of change.

Marvin, Stephen. World study inquiry series: Africa. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969. 160pp. Paper. $2.25. Teacher's Manual. $1.23.

Originally published in Palo Alto by Field Educational Publications, this series offers easy reading selections, both fiction and non-fiction, along with discussion questions, for junior and senior high school students.

- "Stupid girl!" (pp. 87-89). Margaret wants to leave school because the boys taunt her with cries of "stupid girl" every time she hesitates with an answer. She has decided that women belong at home "having babies and digging in a garden." Koli takes the other view: "Men don't know everything.... I want to be a nurse.... Maybe I'll be important and make lots of money." Use with the article "Women's Changing Roles" (annotated in the Non-Fiction section, page 195) and discussion questions on page 92.

Nwapa, Flora. This is Lagos and other stories. Enugu, Nigeria: Nwankwo-Ifejika, 1971. 117pp. Out-of-print.

The writer is Nigeria's first published female novelist. This is a collection of short stories having as a common demoninator the life of urban women in modern Nigeria.

- "This is Lagos" (pp. 9-18).
  Soha goes to Lagos to live with her aunt and take care of her aunt's five children. She is a very "dutiful" young girl until she meets a boy, Ibinkinle. She is warned to be careful of Lagos men, "they are too deep for you," but Soha secretly marries him according to the ways of "white people." Although Soha's relatives hound her to remain close to them, the new couple make a clean break and Ibinkinle never does present himself to Soha's parents as their son-in-law. The theme is that when people live in Lagos "they forget their home and background."
- "Child thief (pp. 42-57).
  Even though Agnes is sophisticated and has an English education, she deteriorates badly as the years go by and she finds she cannot conceive. This is a common theme in Nigerian literature and in the case of Agnes shows how her changed social and economic status does not outweigh the guilt she feels in not fulfilling her traditional role as child bearer.

  Agnes's husband has two children with an uneducated "outside" wife and eventually his people install this wife in the household in Agnes's place. At last it seems she is pregnant and her husband, rejoicing, is at her side, until they discover that the "pregnancy" is a tumor. Agnes, in desperation, steals a newborn boy from the hospital the day after her operation and ultimately is arrested.
- "The delinquent adults" (pp. 58-80).
  Ozoemena had a perfect modern marriage. She was in love and happy. Then her husband dies, leaving her with two small children, and the full weight of her culture's traditions falls on her. Although she can resist marrying her husband's brother, his in-laws accuse her of hiding their share of her husband's money and threaten her to "swear by the gods."

Her mother, realizing Ozoemena did not finish teacher training school, contrives for her daughter to be mistress to a wealthy man who could send her through school. Ozoemena, furious at this last act, ("I would have thought that if I wanted to be a prostitute I should go about it my own way") is nonetheless realizing that she cannot earn her own way in the city and that she has an obligation to pay, also, for the education of her young sons.

- "The loss of Eze" (pp. 81-92).

Amede Ezeka talks about her discomfort about going to a party alone after losing a long-time boyfriend Eze. The young woman is educated and polished, yet her dependence on Eze for emotional support and decisions leaves her with a loss of confidence without him. This is a portrait of a woman alone without kinship support. Amede's observations about her life and about the people at the party should give students an opportunity to contrast and compare her life with theirs and/or her life with that of a young Chinese woman.

Shelton, Austin, ed. The African assertion: a critical anthology of African literature. New York: Odyssey Press, 1968. 273pp. Paper. $3.45.

A succinct introduction to the book as a whole, introductions to each section, and discussion questions add to the value of this anthology. Though not intended for high school, it can be adapted for secondary use.

- Chacha, Tom. "Road to Mara" (pp. 163-169).

Bena is a woman caught in the conflicts of change. Her father has chosen for her a rich man whom she dislikes. She is in love with another man, Gutimu. In desperation she leaves her village to seek him in the city (Mara), only to discover that he has taken a wife already.

Bena's lonely bus ride to Mara reveals not only her fear in entering this new city-world, but also the mixed feelings of the other passengers. The old people see her as "one of those spoilt modern girls going to be a common prostitute in the town," while a young man admires her and thinks "I know precisely what you are feeling."

This is a good companion to the Sutherland selection in Shelton, annotated in the traditional readings section (page 136). Students should see that Foruwa seemingly has much more control over her life than Bena does.

Tibble, Ann, ed. African English literature. New York: October House, 1965. 304pp. Hardcover. $6.95. Paper. $2.95.

- Soyinka, Wole. "From The lion and the jewel" (pp. 256-263).

Our pagination is from the hardcover edition.

This is a short selection from a satirical play which is easy for students to read and act out. It will focus on the question of whether modern African women have a more "progressive" status than traditional women. Both this play and the poem Song of Lawino (mentioned in Clark and in "Hair" above) show how men were educated to participate in modern technology while women remained in traditional villages.

The Westernized school teacher calls Sidi a "bush girl - uncivilized and primitive" and attempts to educate her to the ways of "civilized beings." Students may take Sidi's side as she argues for tradition. They should look for places where the teacher's Westernized thinking degrades women, e.g., a classic, "Scientists have proved it -- women have a smaller brain than men."

Audio-visuals

Fear woman. 1971. Elspeth MacDougall. Color. 28 minutes. $20 rental from Contemporary/McGraw-Hill, 330 West 42nd Street, New York 10036.

"With dignity and confidence, three strong women from Ghana -- a tribal chief, a business woman and a justice of the supreme court -- explain their work and their hopes to improve the status of women in Ghana and other countries. Young people can particularly identify with one scene in a high school classroom. The young women who want a future outside the home have a humorous yet sharp debate with the young men who want their future wives to remain at home." (Artel and Wengraf, Positive images, p. 41).

Malawi: the women. 1971. Churchill Films. Color. 15 minutes. $8.50 rental from Churchill Films, 662 N. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles 90069.

"Malawi, a southeast African nation, is making the transition from rural to industrial society. This change has affected the role of Malawi women. Because men must live in the cities to find jobs, the women in the villages now perform both men's and women's work: raising children, chopping wood and building homes. Another aspect of this transition is depicted by a young college educated woman who works as a secretary in the city and enjoys her independent, urban life." (Artel and Wengraf, Positive images, p. 70).

Both these films come with teacher's guides; the one for Fear Woman is more detailed, but both are helpful.

Overview of Women in China: Traditional

Nagat El-Sanabary
Carolyn Reese

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INTRODUCTION

To facilitate the comparison with women's positions in other traditional cultures, we have structured the overviews around important events in a woman's life from childhood to adulthood. This organization reveals aspects of a woman's life that are peculiar to Chinese women, and others which are shared with women in other traditional cultures. Differences between the position of women in traditional China and Africa, as well as similarities, will be pointed out at the appropriate points in the overviews of the two traditional cultures. Our emphasis in both overviews is on the power that women had in personal, economic and political spheres. Let us begin with some brief background information on China.

One-Fifth of the World's Women: China is one of the largest countries in the world and one of the oldest civilizations in existence. In 1970, China had 900 million people, about one-fifth of the world population. Thus, when we learn about Chinese women, we learn about one-fifth of the women of the world. The population is growing at the rate of about 12 million per year; it is estimated that by the year 2000, it will reach one billion.

The history of women in China spans several thousand years. Over the past quarter of a century, China and Chinese women have undergone some of the most dramatic changes known in history. The Communist regime, which gained power in October of 1949, has instituted revolutionary changes in every aspect of life in China, including a major transformation in the position and roles of women.

To study women in China, three historical periods need particular consideration: 1) the traditional period which ends with the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty in 1911; 2) the transitional period of military struggle, beginning with the establishment of the Republic in 1911 and ending with the

Communist victory in 1949; and, 3) the modern period which began with the establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of China in October of 1949.

Concepts to Define:

feudal society
extended family
Confucius
Mencius
Confucianism
dynasty
female infanticide
bound feet
courtesan
arranged marriage
power of the mother-in-law
filial piety

Age, Sex, Wealth Determine Status: Traditional China was basically a feudal society, with agriculture the basis of its economy. A small elite ruling class of rich landlords owned most of the land and exploited the majority of the people -- the farmers and land tenants. The gap between the rich and the poor was very wide.

The feudal Chinese abided by centuries-old traditions which regulated the relationships between the rulers and the ruled, as well as between the old and the young and men and women. In fact, age and sex were major factors in determining a person's status in the family and in the larger society. Older people and males enjoyed a superior status over younger people and females. A young girl was at the lowest end of the social scale both because of her sex and her age. The status of a woman increased if she had male children, as well as when she got older and when she became a mother-in-law to her sons' wives. It was common for older women to vent their frustrations they suffered as young women on their daughters-in-law.[1]

Confucianism: The position of women in traditional China was based on the teaching of Confucius -- a Chinese philosopher who lived between ca. 551-479 B.C. Confucius and his followers urged a system of morality and statecraft which was originally intended to bring peace, justice and universal order to a society that was beset by warfare, corruption and tyranny. Filial piety was heavily stressed and became increasingly important as the system (Confucianism) endured. The basic moral principle of this system is the maintenance of jen (roughly, sympathy) between people by establishing balanced relationships. Similar to what Christians know as the Golden Rule, the Confucian dictum is: Treat those who are subordinate to you as you would be treated by those who are in positions superior to yours.

PERSONAL POWER

Focus Questions:

In looking for spheres of power in the personal lives of Chinese girls and women, see if they had control over

- *whether to have their feet bound;*
- *whom they married;*
- *whether to stay unmarried;*
- *whether to have children and the number of children;*
- *whether to divorce;*
- *whether to remarry, if they were widowed.*

What means did Chinese women use to gain personal power?

As used throughout this curriculum, personal power refers to a woman's control over her body and her time. Issues involved in personal power include: a woman's ability to act in her own behalf in choosing whether to marry and whom to marry, whether to have children and how many, whether to leave home for long or short periods and where to go. Other personal power decisions involve choice of friends, development of creative potentialities through education and selection of occupation.

Childhood

Girls Were Not Wanted: In China, the birth of a girl marked the beginning of her subjugation as a female. Chinese families rejoiced in the birth of sons, but considered female infants undesirable, even unlucky. This was especially true of poor families, where a girl was considered a burden. She was one more mouth to feed, and when grown up she would belong to her husband's family. A son, however, would perpetuate the family's name; this was a particularly important consideration for rich families. A son in a poor family would help support his family and bring a wife to help with the housework and maybe the farming.

A woman's primary objective immediately after marriage was to bear sons in order to perpetuate the family line. According to Mencius, a disciple of Confucius, "There are three unfilial acts: the greatest of these is the failure to produce sons." It was stated in a book of odes written 3,000 years ago:

> When a son is born, he is laid down on couches, and is given a piece of jade to play with. When a daughter is born, she is laid on the floor and is given a piece of tile to play with. 2

This reveals the attitude in old China toward girls -- an attitude which dominated Chinese thinking and behavior for several thousand years.

Poor Girls Sometimes Killed or Sold: In old China, a girl's options were extremely limited. She had little or no access to formal education, and little possibility of developing special creative potentialities. (Boys, too, received little or no education in poor families.) She lived in complete subordination to her father and brothers. Obedience guided all her actions.

Over 90 percent of the Chinese population consisted of destitute peasants. Poverty forced some Chinese families to kill their daughters in infancy (female infanticide). Other poor families sold their daughters in the hope that they would have a better life with a wealthier family. However, exploitation by slave dealers often occurred and a girl could be sold over and over again for the financial gain of the dealer. Husbands might also sell their wives to pay off debts. Thus, poor girls and women suffered the double burden of a society in which the males oppressed the females and the rich oppressed the poor.

Upper Class Girls Protected: The life of upper class girls was less oppressive than that of peasant girls. Although sons were preferred in order to carry on the family name, an upper class female child was cared for and loved. However, she had to conform to the code of conduct prescribed by Confucianism which stressed strict obedience to parents, the cultivation of graceful feminine manners, chastity and submission to male dominance. Wealthy girls, like poor ones, were subordinate to the males in their family. This is not to say, however, that they experienced their lack of options as oppression. Given the thoroughness of their socialization to accept their role and the opulence in which they lived, they may have been generally content with their lives.

Footbinding: One condition which girls, particularly wealthy ones, endured was footbinding. It is not known for sure when this practice started, but it became very popular during the seventeenth century, and continued through the Ch'ing and Manchu Dynasties. Its popularity during that period prompted one historian to call it "the age of small feet fools."[3]

Bound feet were literally worshipped as powerful sexual symbols. The size of the feet was a prime consideration in matching marriage partners. Women with small feet were considered more desirable brides.

Bound feet were associated with wealthy family circumstances in which women could afford the luxury of being idle, since obviously tiny feet hampered a woman's movement. Thus, the binding of a woman's feet symbolized her status.

Although this custom was romanticized as promoting a woman's beauty, its real function may have been voiced in the old Chinese proverb, "Feet are bound not to make them beautiful as a curved bow, but to restrain women when they go out of doors." The binding process, which began before a girl was five years old and continued for 10 to 15 years, was excruciatingly painful and ended in permanent crippling.[4]

> *COMPARISON: Compare footbinding to western women's wearing of high-heels, pointed shoes, or platform shoes. Consider the damage to a woman's feet and posture, as well as the hampering of her movements.*

Not all women were the victims of footbinding. Poor peasant women had to work, and so this exempted them from footbinding. But as already mentioned, they were victims of other forms of suffering. Unmarried peasant daughters could still be sold by their fathers as concubines or prostitutes, if the family needed money.

Opposition to Footbinding: Footbinding had its opponents throughout the history of China. It was banned by the K'ang-hsi

Emperor during the first year of his reign (1662). The ban was ineffective and was rescinded six years later at the recommendation of a high minister.[5]

Yu Ching-hsieh (1775-1840) was among several Chinese scholars who opposed footbinding. He argued that this practice weakened women and destroyed the natural harmony and balance between the two sexes.[6] Another scholar, Yuan Mei (1716-1797) condemned footbinding "on both aesthetic and humanitarian grounds." Writing to a man who had rejected a potential concubine due to the size of her feet, Yuan criticized him severely. Men enlightened in sexual matters, according to Yuan, know that a girl's face, eyes, skin and complexion are far more important than the size of her feet. "If men love small feet so much, they ought to cut them to size and be done with it."[7]

Li Ju-Chen, a famous Chinese writer and feminist (1763-1830), also opposed footbinding and concubinage in his writings. His most eloquent plea for the cause of women was portrayed in his description of the kingdom of women.[8]

Kingdom of Reversed Sex Roles: In "The Women's Kingdom," a merchant, Lin Chih-yang, lost his way and found himself in the women's kingdom, where he expected to make a fortune selling cosmetics. But, to his surprise and ultimate torture, he found that sex roles were completely reversed in this kingdom. He was chosen to be the royal concubine. Despite his protestations, he had to be completely feminized before meeting the "King." He was bathed, perfumed and powdered. His ears were pierced, his feet were bound. He suffered great pain and attempted to remove the bandages several times. But he was repeatedly beaten, and finally was hung upside down until he agreed to be a good "woman."

The description is detailed and clearly satirical, as may be revealed from the following excerpt:

> The ears having been pierced, the wounds were smeared with powder, the ear-lobes gently massaged,

> and a pair of gold earrings affixed. Her task dispatched, the grey-bearded waiting woman retired. Immediately afterwards, however, a black-bearded waiting woman came up with a roll of white silk gauze in her hand and knelt before the bed, saying, "By my lady's leave. His Majesty commands the binding of my lady's feet." Two others also came forward and, kneeling down, grasped Lin's legs, removing the stiff silk socks. The black-bearded waiting woman then placed a low stool near the bed, sat down on it and tore off a good length of the silk gauze. Then, pulling Lin's right foot onto her knees, she sprayed the chinks between the toes with alum; next, she doubled up the toes and pressed them down by main force so as to accentuate the curvature of the arch; finally, she wrapped the crushed foot in tight layers of silk gauze. Another waiting woman came up with needle and thread and, as soon as the second layer of bandage was done, sewed up the hem in close stitches; and even as the cruel bandaging progressed, so the relentless stitching followed. All this while, Lin had been wedged in by the four waiting women; the two others kept his legs firmly in place so that he could not move them an inch. When at last the binding came to an end, his feet were in searing pain as if he was treading on red-hot charcoal. He felt suddenly sick at heart and burst out sobbing -- "Oh, mortification and shame!" 9

Bound feet were considered a proof of a woman's capacity to suffer and obey -- characteristics for which she was especially complimented by her in-laws. Thus, after many years of suffering her bound feet became a means of gaining some respect and recognition.

COMPARISON: Footbinding recalls the pain young African girls endured in coming-of-age rites. The idea that pain is part of the hard lot of women appears in many cultures. The traditional Christian view of childbirth also fits in this category.

TEACHER'S NOTE: The topic of footbinding provides an opportunity for you to discuss the powerful effects of socialization. For example, you might note how mothers were socialized thoroughly to accept this practice of footbinding as a necessary suffering and thus in turn inflict this painful process on their daughters. Both *mothers and daughters were victims of tradition. Even if the mother resented the footbinding, she usually convinced herself and her daughter that the practice was unavoidable fate. Commenting on this practice, Linda Gordon pointed out, "It is revealing to consider how thorough must have been the conditioning (socialization) of mothers that made them willing to inflict that (pain) upon their daughters."* 10

DISCUSSION:

In feudal China, as we noted, bound feet were status symbols. Those whose feet were not bound were considered lower-class women with large ugly feet. Can you think of practices that women in other cultures exhibit as status symbols or use to beautify themselves?

Can students think of one thing they do that is uncomfortable or even damaging to them but gives them beauty and/or status? Perhaps they are doing something that will be damaging at a distant point in the future. Orthopedists point out that a main cause of foot malformation is the wearing of fashionable pointed-toe, high-heeled shoes. Bunions, hammer-toe, corns and callouses can result. Back ailments also are attributed to wearing such shoes because they upset the natural balance of the human body. The harmful effects of cosmetics need consideration as well.

Piety to Parents Heavily Stressed: For girls and women, as for boys and men, filial piety was stressed, but the Confucian code was much stricter when applied to women. The "Three Obediences" derived from Confucianism demonstrate the inferior position of woman which placed her under the dominance of male members of the family from birth to death. These "Three Obediences" include obedience to the father and elder brothers when young, obedience to the husband when married, and obedience to the sons when widowed. There was also what was known as the "Four Virtues" -- the first of which is "women's virtue," which meant that a woman must know her place under the sun and behave according to the old ethical code; secondly, "women's speech," meaning that a woman must not talk too much; thirdly, "women's appearance," meaning that a woman must pay attention to adorning herself in order to please men, and fourthly, "women's chores," namely household responsibilities.[11]

These virtues were instilled in girls and women by various means. Women were allowed only the rudiments of education, since conservative Confucians believed in the old adage that a woman's virtue lies in her lack of literary accomplishment. However, upper class women were arduously taught classical works designed to inculcate moral virtues and filial piety. They read such books as The Four Books for Women and Biographies of Exemplary Women.[12]

The following poem, "The Lute," illustrates how literature was used to instill desired virtues. In this excerpt, note particularly the virtues stressed in the last two lines.

TEACHER'S NOTE: Ask students to look for the woman's demonstration of filial piety towards her parents-in-law, when her husband was away in the city. What signs of courage did she show? How did she manage to get to the city to inform her husband of his parents' death?

The Chao daughter was beautiful
And Ts'ai Po-chieh accomplished in scholarship.
They were but two months married,
When, alas, the Examinations were proclaimed
And men of learning sought all over the Empire.
By stern paternal command
Compelled to enroll himself among the candidates
Po-chieh with one attempt won top place at the Palace,
And married again the daughter of Prime Minister Niu.
Ensnared by advancement and honour, he failed to return.
In a year of famine his parents both perished with hunger,
A conjuncture truly deserving pity!
Deserving of pity,
The Chao daughter still bore up,
Cut and sold her hair to bury the parents-in-law.
With her sackcloth skirt she carried earth
And heaped it up in a mound;
Then with her lute she recounted her many sorrows
As she made her way to the capital.

Oh, filial Po-chieh! Oh virtuous daughter of Niu!
Too, too grievous the reunion in the library!
They all returned to dwell in huts by the grave,
The man and his two wives,
Upon whose house the Emperor conferred distinction.

Richest and most exalted was Prime Minister Niu;
In charity and benevolence excelled Squire Chang,
With virtue and courage behaved the daughter of Chao;
Completely loyal, and thus completely filial,
remained Ts'ai Po-chieh![13]

Womanhood

Every society has its own definition of womanhood. The passage from girlhood to womanhood may be marked with elaborate ceremonies, as in traditional Africa's rites of passage, or it may occur with little fuss. Generally speaking, there were no coming of age rites in traditional China. The only actions that marked the passage from childhood to adulthood were the capping of boys in their twentieth year, and the placing of hair pins in girls hair at age 15.[14]

Ideals of Feminine Beauty: Adolescent girls, especially those from wealthy families, began to prepare for marriage through an elaborate program of beautifying themselves. The concept of feminine beauty was especially stressed in the upper classes where time and resources were available to that end.

A famous writer of Chinese erotic literature, Li-Yu (1611-1679), lists the qualifications of beauty in women in order of their importance. Complexion comes first, with methods described for whitening the skin. Next, he discusses the types of eyes and hands and the method for beautifying them. Feet should be small and bound tightly enough that a man will feel pity and be induced to massage them. Overall, a woman should seem weak, pliable, dependent, shy and bashful. This makes her both attractive and seductive.[15]

Upper class women used cosmetics to beautify themselves. One writer comments:

> At all events, ladies of rank, wives of merchants, all lavished the greatest care on their appearance. They kept their cosmetics, their jewelry, and their polished metal mirrors in boxes made of lacquered wood, jade, gold, or silver; and wore perfume sachets hung from their girdles. 16

Jacques Garnet describes the care which women took to beautify themselves and the influence of these practices on

European cultures in the following passage:

> In the region of Peking girls of well-to-do families covered their faces in wintertime with a kind of ointment with a vegetable base, to protect their complexion against the cold and the wind. They kept on this paste, known as "Buddha adornment," until the spring, and when their complexion was then exposed to view after being preserved from contact with sun and wind for so long, it was said to have the beauty of jade. However, in Hangchow, with its more temperate climate, the make-up worn by the ladies consisted of a white foundation, with powder of a deep rose shade placed on the cheeks. Hangchow women also took great care of their nails. They tinted them with a product made up from pink balsam leaves crushed in alum. The colour, pale at first, deepened with several applications, and then remained indelible for several weeks. "Actually," says one author, "the older ladies tint their nails in this way every sixty or seventy days. But Muslim women adore this dye, and some of them even use it all over their hands. There are people who find it amusing to tint cats and dogs with it." The ladies were fond of putting oil on their hair to make it smooth and shining. One case is cited of a very smart young lady who applied an oil which was not suited for that purpose and found her hair coagulating into such a compact and solid mass that there was nothing to be done but cut it off. Another fashion, known in China since before the Christian era, recalls one which came into vogue in Europe before the last war: the fashion of plucking the eyebrows and pencilling them in with a black line, which often gives the face a rather impersonal expression, but which is thought to make it more attractive. 17

Extreme Virtue Expected of Women: But beauty was not viewed as only a physical matter. Morality was another aspect of woman's beauty. Traditional China was pervaded by a very strict moralistic view of sexual relations which was applied much more consistently to women than men. A woman's greatest concern was to preserve her chastity for her husband during his life and after his death. A victim of rape was expected to kill herself. This was considered to be the only way such an unfortunate woman could redeem her virtue. Several Chinese writers attacked this practice. For instance, a famous eighteenth century writer, Yuan Mei (1716-1797), pointed out that rape was no reflection on a woman's character and that such a woman should not be condemned by society for no crime of her own.[18]

> *DISCUSSION:*
>
> *In China, being beautiful went beyond physical beauty. One had to act in a certain way to be considered a beautiful woman. Is this true in America today? When you think of a beautiful woman what character traits do you feel she should have?*
>
> *Like beauty, does the concept of femininity imply how a woman acts as well as how she looks? Is your answer also true in regard to the concept of masculinity?*
>
> *What were the traditional views and attitudes towards virginity in America?*
>
> *Do these views differ from prevalent attitudes of today's America?*
>
> *What are the current attitudes towards rape victims in America?*

Rich Women Secluded, but Had Some Power: Rich and poor women alike were expected to conform to the strict moral code of conduct that has just been discussed. However, it was more difficult for the poor to do so as their lives were much more vulnerable than those of upper class women. Wealthy women lived isolated lives and exercised considerable power within their homes. This is described in the following passage by a woman from a Mandarin family.

> Genteel Chinese ladies of the old regime led secluded lives -- they never went about except in a closed carriage, they saw no one but the members of their family or the women of other families, and they had few, if any, intellectual pleasures or pursuits. But as a compensation for this lack

> of power outside the home, they came to wield great power inside the home. Theoretically, the men were the heads of the families; but in nearly every Chinese house, the real head was the "Dowager Mother" -- the oldest living woman on the male side of the line. Out of respect to her the men of the family gave in to her wishes, going against her wishes only in moments of extreme seriousness. As for the rest of the family, all the wives, children, and servants were expected to defer to her as a queen. 19

Upper class women, then, had little contact with unrelated women, other than servants, as well as limited contacts with the male members of their families; they also got very little information about events of the world outside their homes. Some women found that kind of life boring, despite its luxury.

Poor Women Had Social Interaction: By contrast, lower class women oftentimes had to go out of their homes either to work in the fields, to do the laundry in the canals, to shop for food, or even to beg for a living. Marion J. Levy describes the lives of poor Chinese women as follows:

> Light inside their houses was poor, and peasant women frequently sat on their doorsteps or along the streets to do sewing and similar jobs. They did their washing along the banks of local streams or canals, and several groups of women were generally busy with their work at the same time. Since they had no servants to shop and market for them, the peasant women and their daughters who accompanied them came into more contact with local shopkeepers and peddlers than did their gentry counterparts. 20

These women could not conform to the standards of feminine beauty, but nevertheless had to abide by the moral standard of Confucianism.

COMPARISON: In many cultures, poor women have not been able to afford, in time or money, to conform to the standards of beauty set up by the upper classes. The same is still true in many parts of the world today.

Legendary, Yet Very Real Shrews: Some women used verbal ability to gain considerable power within the family and protect themselves from mistreatment. Writings by missionaries as well as some Chinese literature abound with stories about the "village shrew" who terrorized everybody. Arthur Smith, a missionary writing in 1899, noted:

> To defend herself against the fearful odds which are often pitted against her, a Chinese wife has but two resources. One of them is her mother's family, which, as we have seen, has no real power...
>
> The other means of defense which a Chinese wife has at her command is -- herself. If she is gifted with a fluent tongue, especially if it is backed by some of the hard common sense which so many Chinese exhibit, it must be a very peculiar household in which she does not hold her own. Real ability will assert itself, and such light as a Chinese woman possesses will assuredly permeate every corner of the domestic bushel under which it is of necessity hidden. If a Chinese wife has a violent temper, if she is able at a moment's notice to raise a tornado about next to nothing, and to keep it for an indefinite period blowing at the rate of a hundred miles an hour, the position of such a woman is almost certainly secure. The most termagant of mothers-in-law hesitates to attack a daughter-in-law who has no fear of men or of demons and who is full equal to any emergency. A Chinese woman in a fury is a spectacle by no means uncommon. But during the time of the most violent paroxysms of fury, Vesuvius itself is not more unmanageable by man.
>
> ...If a Chinese woman has the heaven-bestowed gift of being obstreperous to such a degree... this is unquestionably her surest life-preserver ...But if such an endowment has been denied her, the next best resource is to pursue a course exactly the opposite, in all circumstances and under all provocations holding her tongue. To most Chinese women, this seems to be a feat as difficult as aerial navigation, but now and then an isolated case shows that the difficult is not always the impossible. 21

A sharp tongue bestowed on women a kind of mystical power which others tried to guard themselves against. It is reported that some women used this semimystical power to reform a drinking or gambling husband. A European missionary tells of how the wife of a man addicted to gambling went to the den where he practiced his habit and fought with him. Since it was a bad omen for a man and a woman to fight in another man's house, the owner of the den ordered the husband never to enter the den again. Although this woman was beaten by her husband for her behavior, her authority in the home and the shop (he was a small shop keeper) increased sharply.[22]

The most eloquent portrayal of the village shrew is given in a literary piece titled "The Shrew." It is a humorous account that succeeds in securing the reader's admiration for the woman's courage. (We have included it among the student readings.) She proved to be too much for her inlaws; denounced by them and by her husband, she was sent back to her father. In the following excerpt, she tells of the dissolution of the marriage and her decision to become a nun.

> "Then all at once they wrote the certificate
>   of dissolution.
> My one hope was to find contentment and peace
>   at home --
> How should I expect even Dad and Ma would
>   blame me?
> Abandoned by the husband's family and my own,
> I will cut off my hair and become a nun,
> Wear a straight-seamed gown and dangle a gourd
>   from a pole,
> And carry in my hands a huge 'wooden fish.'
> In the daytime from door to door I shall beg
>   for alms;
> By night within the temple I shall praise the Buddha,
>   Chant my 'Namah,'
>   Observe my fasts and attend to my exercises.
>   My head will be shaven and quite, quite bald;
>   Who then will not hail the little priestess?"
> And having spoke, she removed her ornaments and changed out of her gay garments into a suit of cotton clothes. She then went before her parents, joined the palms of her hands to perform a Buddhist salute, and bade them farewell. And she turned and bade her brother and sister-in-law farewell. And the brother and sister-in-law said to her: "Since you have chosen to take the vows, let us

accompany you to the Clear Voice Temple in the
street in front." Ts'ui-lien however, replied:
"Brother and sister-in-law, do not accompany me,
I will go by myself;
And when I am gone, you can be easy and free.
As the ancients put it well:
'Though here not welcome, elsewhere I shall be.'
Since I am renouncing the world
And shall have my head shaven,
All places may be my home --
Why only the Clear Voice Temple?
Unencumbered and without a care,
I too shall be free and easy."

She would not cling to wealth and rank;
Wholeheartedly she embraced her vows.
She donned her nun's brocade robes
And constantly fingered her beads.
Each month she kept her fasts;
Daily she offered up fresh flowers,
A Bodhisattva she might not become:
To be Buddha's least handmaid would still content her! 23

Courtesans: There were those, however, who conformed to the standards of beauty but defied the standards of moral conduct. They did so either by personal choice or because of the force of economic circumstances. These women were the courtesans and the singing and dancing girls in houses of prostitution. Their lives were described by Western visitors to China, or in their own courtesan poetry. This poem, "To the Tune of 'I Paint My Lips Red,'" succinctly describes the life of a prostitute.

After kicking on the swing,
Lasciviously, I get up and rouge my palms.
Thick dew on a frail flower,
Perspiration soaks my thin dress.
A new guest enters.
My stockings come down
And my hairpins fall out.
Embarrassed, I run away,
And lean flirtatiously against the door,
Tasting a green plum. 24

Thus, we note that double standards were rampant in feudal China, not only with regard to women as compared to men, but also with regard to women of different socio-economic classes.

Marriage and Family

Marriages in traditional China were arranged between families through go-betweens or matchmakers. Young women and men were not consulted about the choice of mates. The decision was a family rather than an individual matter. Interestingly, it was the mother who negotiated the marriage of her son or daughter.

In many pre-industrial societies, the most important social and economic unit was the large, extended family. (An extended family consists of many of a person's relatives -- aunts, uncles, younger siblings, and so forth.) Marriages often created a union between two large family groups and therefore were too important to be left to the decision of two individuals. Personal desires were subordinate to the families' needs. Most young people did not question this fact. They were expected to want to marry. They looked upon marriage and childraising as obligations they had to fulfill in order to have full adult status in the community. Ann Oakley describes the function of marriage in pre-industrial England in very similar terms.

> In seventeenth-century England, marriage was essential for full membership in adult society, and it was expected that all men and women would marry, and that all who could would have children...
>
> Marriage and parenthood were important because it was not the individual who mattered, nor even the nuclear family of two parents and children, but the larger unit...the extended family. 25

COMPARISON: In most traditional societies, arranged rather than love-based marriages were the mode. Love might come to a couple after a marriage, but it was not a prerequisite for marrying. Arranged marriage has been the traditional way in Africa.

Marriages Sometimes Arranged During Childhood: In old China, a girl would sometimes be betrothed at a very young age, even at birth, to a cousin. The two young people would grow up knowing that they were destined for each other. This was especially true in upper class families. Sometimes such a union would result in a romance between the two young persons as they grew up and got to know each other in the extended family setting. Or the arrangement could result in friction. But, regardless of how the pair felt about each other, the betrothal would culminate in marriage. It could only be dissolved at the whim of a powerful adult, oftentimes the grandmother.

In the novel Dream of the Red Chamber, Black Jade's planned marriage to her cousin was terminated because she became ill and thus was considered unfit for the young man she loved. It is a tragic story, somewhat similar to Romeo and Juliet. The young man, after recovering from a serious illness, is deceived into marrying another woman. (He learned only after the ceremony that he had married the wrong woman.) After the initial shock, love developed between the young man and his new wife. However, Black Jade did not survive the shock; she died a tragic death.

Girls were often married at a very young age, and frequently to men who were 15 or 20 years older than they were. Parents received payments, referred to by anthropologists as the bride price, for their daughters. As the saying went, "The daughter goes out, and the ox comes in" (meaning that the bride price would be used to buy an ox).

Marriages were in most instances joyous occasions, and were cause for community celebration. Everyone participated in the festivities that preceded the wedding night.

COMPARISON: Bride price was also the custom in traditional Africa.

After marriage, the woman belonged to her husband and his parents. Mistreatment of the wife by her husband and especially the mother-in-law was common. A man treated his wife as a possession. He could take additional wives, or even, if compelled by poverty, sell them off.

> *STUDENT ACTIVITY:*
>
> *Westerners have difficulty conceiving of a happy marriage which does not result from individual choice. Yet, in America, in some points in history and within some cultural groups, arranged marriages were the practice. The following incident described by Rose Cohen, who in 1895 was a sixteen-year-old Jewish immigrant sweatshop worker, shows what getting married meant for her then. After reading the excerpt, react to the discussion question.*
>
> ...About two days later my mother asked me hesitatingly and without looking at me, "Well, what do you think of that young man?"
>
> I looked at her in surprise. "What young man?" I asked. "The young man from the grocery store on Broome Street," she said.
>
> "I did not think of him. Why?"
>
> Then with great earnestness mother explained to me that the young man was a possible suitor and a very desirable one, that he was getting an excellent living out of the store and that he very much wished to become "further acquainted," and, a meeting had already been arranged for Saturday....
>
> That evening and the next day my parents looked quietly excited and expectant. The next night, while we were at supper, a message came from the matchmaker saying that the young man and his family were "pleased" and would be happy at an "alliance."
>
> Father was so pleased at the news that his face became quite radiant.... "A girl without a cent to her name," he said, quite lost in wonder. Mother too looked pleased....
>
> "And what do you say, Ruth?" father asked.
>
> Somehow I had never quite realized that this question would really be put to me and that I would have to answer it....
>
> I went into the bedroom and wept with my face buried in the pillows. "Why did I have to decide this? I had never been allowed to

> decide the smallest thing before - the shape of my shoes, the length of my dress.
>
> "Father is poor and I am not strong." These words had impressed themselves on my mind... "It is clear then," I thought, "that I must marry. And if I did not marry this young man, whom could I marry?" 26

DISCUSSION:

Did Ruth want to make the decision on her own?

What motivated Ruth to marry this young man who she did not know? (economic factors: If Ruth refused her suitor, her alternative at that time was to remain at home, a burden to her poor family; social factors: Ruth did not have the choice of living as a single woman unless she wanted to sacrifice her reputation.)

An Arranged Marriage: Gold Flower's Story: While little information is available, at least in English translations, about happy arranged marriages in China, we read much in the literature about the misery and unhappiness resulting from such marriages. Jack Belden's Gold Flower's Story is an example:

> She was then fifteen. It was her wedding eve. A happy time! But she no longer wanted to live. Quickly, she went to the kitchen and picked up a rope. Groping in the dark, she made her way to her own room, found a bench and dragged it over, near the door. Climbing on the bench, she threw one end of the rope over a beam above the door, tied a slip knot in the rope, stuck her head in the noose, kicked the bench away and hanged herself.
>
> A few moments later, her parents, returning from the party, found her and cut her down. Neighbors, summoned by her parents, poured into the house and after two hours' hard work, brought Gold Flower back to life. When she woke, Gold Flower saw her mother weeping with her head on the bed.
>
> Drying her tears, the mother stood up and said solemnly, "You must wait for fate."
>
> At these words, which Chinese parents have used for countless generations to badger their daughters into unwanted marriages, an icy chill crept around Gold Flower's heart. So she had not

done with this life, she thought, with all this treachery, with this black society, this slavery. She hated it all. When her mother repeated the phrase, Gold Flower felt her gorge rising like a bitter poison in her throat.

"Do you remember the day you were young?" she said. "Was it suitable for you to marry someone fifteen years older than you?" Suddenly she raised herself like a galvanized corpse. "You want to kill me!"

Her mother backed away in astonishment. Feeling she had to struggle, Gold Flower summoned all her strength and, rising from the bed, pushed her mouth into her mother's face.

"I won't obey your commands," she shouted. "You old fool! You stupid woman! You donkey!"

The neighbors, scandalized at this attack, tried to calm Gold Flower, but she would not be still. She soon began spitting like a cat. Her lips became drawn in a snarl. Her limbs were convulsed, her whole body taut as a violin string. She began to scream loudly. She cursed her mother, railed at her, implored her to kill her, and thrust away with stiffened arms anyone who dared approach her.

But finally she exhausted herself. Weeping and choked by sobs that shook her whole body, she collapsed on the bed. She lay at full length, her eyelids closed, her hands open and motionless. Two streams of tears flowed out of her half-closed eyes and fell on the straw matting under her head. Once in a while her lips moved in a whisper: "No...no." And she savagely gritted her teeth.

The neighbors closed in on Gold Flower and began to offer her words of unwanted comfort and unwanted advice. Gold Flower felt suffocated by the ring of faces above her. But they would not go away. Hour after hour, the neighbors pounded at her. She felt as if a great weight were pressing her down. Not able to marry the man she loved, not able even to kill herself so that she could remain loyal to her lover, completely done in and drained of all strength, she at last fell into a deep stupor.

When Gold Flower awoke, it was her wedding day. The sedan chair was already at the gate. Ruthlessly, she was put aboard.

It was past noon when the sedan chair set her down in the courtyard of her new home, and Gold Flower stepped out and saw her husband for the first time. He was grinning at her appreciatively.

> But Gold Flower looked at his features with an air of shocked loathing, realizing that her friends had warned her only too well. He appeared twenty years older than she. With the image of Lipao still fresh in her mind, her husband appeared doubly ugly. He had a chalk face, a mole on one cheek from which hung a long, black hair. His teeth were crooked and of uneven length like tombstones in a graveyard. His nose was flat, his mouth full, his lips loose. A perfect ogre, thought Gold Flower. 27

Marriage as an Oppressive State: Several aspects of the traditional Chinese marriage were oppressive. For instance, from the moment she entered the husband's household, a woman ceased to belong to her own family. She lost her name and the relationship with her own family was severed. She might not even be allowed to visit her own family without permission from her husband or his parents. There are stories of women prevented from visiting their father or mother when they were seriously ill.

> *COMPARISON: In traditional Africa, married women retained strong ties with their families and could return to them, temporarily or permanently, if their marriages resulted in unhappiness.*

The tyranny of the mother-in-law was a major part of the young wife's burden. In households where there were several daughters-in-law, there was likely to be intense friction. But these tensions were somehow kept under control by the many authoritarian features of the old family structure.

A Chinese woman was expected to assume a heavy portion of the family workload. O'Sullivan quotes the Peking Review (March 9, 1973):

> In those days ... there was a saying which likened a bride to a pack horse, broken in and at the beck and call of every one. As part of the wedding ritual when the bride arrived at her husband's home, she was made to crawl under a saddle to signify her com-

> plete submission to work like a beast of burden
> until her dying day. 28

It was only through her function as a breeder that she attained what little status she had in society.

While a man could take additional wives or concubines, faithfulness was the rule for women. Furthermore, widows were not allowed to remarry. In short, both before and after marriage, women in traditional China had few alternatives from which to choose.

Women Supported One Another: Sometimes women used the support of other women to bring about some small measure of improvement in their circumstances and thus gain some kind of limited control over their lives. A woman treated unfairly by her mother-in-law might tell the women with whom she performed her chores of this mistreatment. The other women would then gossip about it, thus causing a loss of face or embarrassment for the mother-in-law. This tactic usually resulted in better treatment for the daughter-in-law.

COMPARISON: In West Africa, women had their own village councils called mikiri. Sometimes mikiri decisions were enforced through inflicting verbal infliction of insults at the offending person, who, being ashamed, would then make the changes that the mikiri demanded.

TEACHER'S NOTE: Women used gossip to gain power within the family when deprived of other sources of personal power in traditional China. Later, during the period of military struggle and in the Revolutionary period, women made full use of their ability to gain personal power from the support of other women in what came to be known as "speak bitterness" sessions. Thus, a tradition was revolutionized. Precisely because it built upon the customary reliance on female support, the practice as it evolved in later years was highly successful. Teachers should keep this evolution in mind as a reference point when discussing the speak bitterness movement in the Continuity and Change section of this overview.

DISCUSSION:

Reflect on these questions in writing or in a group:

- *Do you think that gossip influences people to change their behavior?*
- *Have you ever used gossip to gain power over another person or persons?*
- *What other alternative means of influence were available to you at the time?*
- *Have you ever used the support of other members of your sex to change something painful in your life?*

Divorce: Divorce was not allowed under the marriage system in feudal China. It was common for a man to repudiate his wife, cast her aside and take a concubine, while not divorcing her. The majority of married women accepted their lot in marriage. They resigned themselves to the expectation that one day they would gain power through their sons by becoming mothers-in-law. This situation shows how limited women's choices were in even the most personal matters.

DISCUSSION:

The double standard just mentioned calls to mind the reality that there are double standards of various sorts in U.S. society today. What are some? How, if at all, do they affect students' lives?

Widowhood: A widow, regardless of her age, was not allowed to remarry. She was supposed to remain loyal to the memory of her husband and to serve his parents, with whom she continued to live after his death. She was expected to be chaste and refrain from any behavior which might damage her reputation. Her actions were constantly watched. According to an old saying, "Gossip hangs around a widow's doorstep." One novelist describes the situation of a widow this way:

> Whenever people find a moment free, they like to watch what is going on inside a widow's house, determined to find something there to keep idle tongues busy. When a woman becomes a widow, the best thing for her to do is to cover her face and weep all day, for the moment her eyes are dry, she is strongly suspected of smiling, and that of course would show that she is living normally like any other person. It would be best also for her not to eat anything at all, for if she shows a preference for sour or spicy foods, she is at once suspected of expecting a baby. One must admit there are more people who like to cheat helpless widows and orphans than who desire to help them. Otherwise, how could a healthy woman ever think of killing herself? Generally speaking, a widow's life is not to be envied. 29

Widowed women were, in fact, expected to die, if necessary, in order to avoid dishonorable violations of their chastity. Even young girls whose husbands died before the consummation of marriage were supposed to conform to this same strict moral code.

In reality, the only socially sanctioned choice available to widows other than to suffer indefinitely, was to commit suicide, usually by starvation. This act honored widows and their families. The government even encouraged widow suicide by giving an allotment of money to the parents of the widow to build a shrine to commemorate her.

A Chinese writer who opposed widows' suicide gave a harsh account of a young woman's starving herself to death after the death of her husband, and the reactions of her parents to this event. Especially interesting is her father's reaction. He takes the matter lightly in the beginning, conforming to tradition and ridiculing his wife's grief. Then his own grief sinks in, especially when he sees happy girls cruising in a boat, and he cannot help but wish that his daughter were still alive. The brief excerpt below is from this novel, The Scholar.

Mr. Wang, the father in this selection, was a university professor and a noted writer. Having been told that his son-in-law was seriously ill, he set upon his journey to see him.

> Mr. Wang walked six or seven miles to his son-in-law's house, and found the young man seriously ill. A doctor was there, but no drugs were of any avail. A few days later his son-in-law died, and Wang mourned bitterly for him; while his daughter's tears must have moved both heaven and earth. When her husband was in his coffin, she paid her respects to his parents and her father.
>
> "Father," she said, "since my elder sister's husband died, you have had to support her at home. Now my husband has died, will you have to support me too? A poor scholar like you can't afford to feed so many daughters!"
>
> "What do you want to do?" her father asked.
>
> "I want to bid farewell to you and my husband's parents, and follow my husband to the grave."
>
> When the dead man's parents heard this, their tears fell like rain.
>
> "Child!" they cried. "You must be out of your mind! Even ants and insects want to live -- how can you suggest such a thing? In life you're one of our household, in death you'll be one of our ghosts. Of course we'll look after you, and not expect your father to support you! You mustn't talk like that!"
>
> "You are old," said the girl. "Instead of helping you, I should just be a burden to you, and that would make me unhappy. Please let me have my own way. But it will be a few days before I die. I'd like you, father, to go home and tell my mother, and ask her to come so that I can say goodbye to her. This means a lot to me."
>
> "Kinsmen," said Wang Yu-huei to his son-in-law's parents, "now that I think this over, I believe, since my daughter sincerely wants to die for her husband, we should let her have her way. You can't stop someone whose mind is made up. As for you, daughter, since this is the case, your name will be recorded in history. Why should I try to dissuade you? You know what you must do. I'll go home now and send your mother over to say goodby to you."

Her parents-in-law would not hear of this, but Wang Yu-huei insisted. He went straight home, and told his wife what had happened.

"You must be in your dotage!" she protested. "If our daughter wants to die, you should talk her out of it, instead of egging her on. I never heard of such a thing!"

"Matters like these are beyond you," retorted Wang.

When his wife heard this, the tears streamed down her cheeks. She immediately hired a chair and went to reason with her daughter, while her husband went on reading and writing at home as he waited for news of his child. In vain did Mrs. Wang argue with her daughter. Each day the girl washed and combed her hair, and sat there keeping her mother company; but no bite or sup passed her lips. Though the old folk begged and implored her, and used all the wiles they could think of, she simply refused to eat. And after fasting for six days she had no strength to get up. The sight of this nearly broke her mother's heart. She fell ill herself, and had to be carried home and put to bed.

When three more days had passed, torches appeared at the second watch, and some men came to knock at their door.

"Your daughter fasted for eight days," they announced. "At midday today she died."

When the mother heard this, she screamed and fainted away. And when they brought her round, she would not stop sobbing. Her husband walked up to her bed.

"You're a silly old woman!" he said. "Our third daughter is now an immortal. What are you crying for? She made a good death. I only wish I could die for such a good cause myself."

He threw back his head and laughed.

"She died well!" he cried. "She died well!"

Then laughing, he left the room.

Yu Yu-ta was amazed when he heard of this the next day, and could not help but be sad. Buying incense and three sacrificial offerings, he went to pay his respects before her coffin. This done, he returned to the yamen, and ordered his clerk to draw up a petition requesting the authorities to honour this devoted widow. His younger brother helped to draft the petition, which was dispatched that same night. Then Yu Yu-chung took offerings and sacrificed before the coffin. When the college students saw their tutor show the dead woman such respect, a great many of them also went to sacrifice. And two months later the authorities decreed that a shrine should be made and placed in the temple, and an archway erected before her home. On the day that she was enshrined, Mr. Yu invited the magistrate to accompany the retinue which escorted the virtuous widow into the temple. All the local gentry, in official robes, joined the procession on foot. Having entered the temple and set the shrine in its place, the magistrate, college tutors and Yu each sacrificed. Then the gentry, scholars and relatives sacrificed. The ceremony lasted all day, and they feasted afterwards in the Hall of Manifest Propriety. The other scholars urged Wang to join the feast, declaring that by bringing up such a virtuous daughter he had reflected glory on his clan. But by now Wang was beginning to feel quite sick at heart, so he declined to join them. After feasting in the Hall of Manifest Propriety, the others went home.

The next day Wang went to the college to thank Mr. Yu. The two brothers received him, and kept him to a meal.

"I can't stand it at home, with my wife grieving all the time," said Wang. "I would like to go on a trip, and I think the best place to visit is Nanking. That's a large printing centre. I may find someone to print these three books of mine."

Too old to travel by road, Wang Yu-huei took a boat to Yenchow and the West Lake. The beautiful scenery on the way made him grieve all the more for his daughter, and he travelled gloomily all the way to Soochow, where he had to change boats.

"I've an old friend at Tengwei Hill," he remembered, "who always liked my writings. Why don't I call on him?"

He left his luggage in an inn at Mountain Lake, and booked a passage to Tengwei Hill. It was still the morning then, and his boat would not leave till evening.

"What places of interest are there near here?" he asked the waiter.

"A couple of miles from here, you'll come to Huchiu Mount. That's a lively spot all right!"

Wang locked his door and went out. The

> street was narrow at first, but after about a mile it widened out. He sat in a tea-house beside the road to drink a bowl of tea as he watched the boats going past. Some were large craft with carved beams and painted pillars, and the passengers burnt incense and feasted all the way to Huchiu Mount. After a number of barges came several boatloads of women. They had hung no bamboo curtains, but were sitting there drinking, dressed in the brightest costumes.
>
> "This Soochow custom is not a good one," thought Wang. "Women should stay in the inner chambers. Who ever heard of them cruising up and down in pleasure boats!"
>
> Soon he noticed a girl in white on one of the barges, who reminded him of his daughter. Then his heart ached, and hot tears rolled down his cheeks. Drying his eyes, he left the tea-house and started up Huchiu Mount. 30

TEACHER'S NOTE: Students may respond negatively to the details of the suicide. However, this reading will help them appreciate more fully the changes that have occurred in the lives of Chinese women since the Revolution.

DISCUSSION:

Was the young woman's suicide an expression of independent personal choice or an unthinking response to what society expected of her? This question is quite philosophical and could involve considerable debate. There may be no clear-cut answer.

So, to conclude this section on personal power, we see that women were highly limited in the degree to which they could determine the quality of their lives. Still, they were not totally without options or outlets. A married woman could garner the support of other women. She could also look forward to increased power over family members when she became a mother-in-law. If she had forceful manner, as it seemed many Chinese women did, she had some success in getting people to obey her will. At the least, her work lessened as she grew older. Widowhood, however, was not a positive condition in any way, except perhaps if a woman saw this as a relief from an oppressive husband. Life for the Chinese woman was perhaps not totally joyless, but it was clearly excruciatingly hard.

ECONOMIC POWER

Focus Questions:

When thinking of women's economic power in China, see if women had control over

- *the type of work they could do;*
- *property or possessions;*
- *getting help with domestic tasks so they could earn a living.*

Economic power encompasses the freedom to work for pay and control one's earnings as well as the right to own property and dispose of it in whatever manner seems suitable.

Women Had Little Economic Power: In examining the position of Chinese women, we find that they had little or no economic power. Most women were completely dependent on male members of their families for economic support. Further, even in rich families, women did not own property and had no inheritance rights. However, by virtue of their families' wealth, upper class women gained some measure of economic power.

Upper Class Women Did Not Work: The seclusion of Chinese upper class women made it unlikely they would work for pay outside the home. In any case, in rich families there was an informal taboo on women working in income-earning jobs since this would be seen by others as an indication the family could not support them, and would damage the social dignity of the family. Women did not even work in their own homes, as they had servants to take care of all housekeeping. (The care of young children was assigned to servants who were the same age or slightly older than the children.)

Women Had Limited Role in Agriculture: By contrast, a small percentage of lower class Chinese women had to work for pay in order to support their families. Women participated in the cultivation of certain crops, most especially of rice in the south. Still, their agricultural contribution was not a major one. In her study of women in the countryside of China, Delia Davin pointed out that:

> ...though women did more farmwork in the south than in the north, their agricultural role in all but a few localities was rather a minor one.

> Moreover, when women did do field-work it was often on a very seasonal basis. They helped with the harvest especially in those areas where it coincided with the planting of another crop, and did secondary chores such as weeding, which carried no prestige. Except in a few areas in the south, it remained the ideal that women should not do agricultural work, and an adage from I-liang, Yunnan, quoted by Buck probably expresses the reluctant acceptance of women in the fields at rush periods which was general in China:
>
> "In the two busy seasons
> Maidens may leave their chambers."[31]

Davin concluded from her study that women's minor role "in rural production ... had its bearing on their status, since in traditional China it was productive work which, within the village family, conferred power and prestige."

Housework Was Highly Demanding: On the whole, most poor women were not employed. Their main responsibility was the bearing and rearing of children and the care of their homes. Housework was "demanding and arduous," as is revealed here:

> Providing meals did not simply mean cooking; it could include the gathering of fuel, the drawing and fetching of water, the husking and grinding or polishing of the grain, and the preserving of glut vegetables and fruits. The processing of grain was often spoken of by women as the heaviest of their tasks. 32

In some families, the women made beancurd, fermented alcohol drinks and prepared tobacco leaves for men's pipe-smoking. Women also made clothes at home, even spinning the thread and making the cloth used in sewing them. They also crafted shoes out of cloth.

These activities and chores indicate that the work women did at home had economic value, even if the society chose not to see it that way. The dilemma of Chinese women becomes clear: Despite the economic value of a woman's work inside the home, she gained no economic power for herself from it.

> *COMPARISON: In many pre-industrial societies, including the colonial United States, women performed the functions that were later on moved to the factory. Only then were these tasks recognized as having economic value. However, economists are presently placing an economic value, even a dollar value, on woman's work inside the home. Still, household tasks do not yet confer economic power on housewives in most cases.*
>
> *In traditional Africa, women were involved in farming and trade -- two activities that had a clear economic value, as perceived by African society.*

Limited Economic Power for Women Earning Money: In those instances where a peasant women earned money for farmwork, she gained a measure of power vis-à-vis her husband, and, especially, her mother-in-law; that is, there was recognition that what she had to offer was worth some concessions on the part of these family members. Specifically, where the woman went out to work, the mother-in-law cooked the meals, cared for her grandchildren, and did menial tasks which would usually have been the duties of the younger woman.

There were other types of work for which some women were paid. This included midwifery, matchmaking, footbinding, outside household or domestic work and prostitution.

In poverty-ridden traditional China, some women were forced to resort to begging or prostitution in order to survive. Prostitutes who served the royal and upper classes gained considerable personal and economic power. In fact, the courtesans of old China are said to have lived luxuriously; much has been written about them and by them, and their poetry is well known.

Some women resorted to priesthood, but their status was little elevated above that of beggars. They sat at temples receiving alms and other offerings to keep themselves alive.

In general, we note that the majority of women in feudal China lived in poverty. When Linda Gordon asked Chinese women about their past, she found out that "although their individual stories were different, they had one striking thing in common; their most moving memories were not of their specific suffering and oppression as women but of the oppression of poverty that they shared with their men."[33] This was the main reason why the Chinese immigrated to America and other countries and were willing to endure much suffering, as we will show in the overview on Chinese-American women.

POLITICAL POWER

Focus Questions:

- *In what ways did women gain political power or influence?*
- *Which women had political power?*
- *Why did most women have no political power?*

In feudal China the political power of women was almost non-existent. Important decisions in the family, village, and state were made by men. Public and civil service posts were held by men. Access to these influential posts was to be had through family influence and competitive civil service examinations, but these were not open to women.

In fact, the masses of both sexes did not have much power since there were no avenues for public participation in government. Political power was vested in the Emperor, high government officials and a corps of civil servants.

Since women lacked legal and property rights, their only political influence lay in their ability to manipulate kinsmen. Occasionally a very strong woman would gain considerable control in her family. But even then the real levers of power were held by men, in the male clan institutions of the village and in the government bureaucracy.

The Power of Empresses: Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that the highest position of political power held by a woman was that of Empress -- either during an Emperor's life or after his death. For instance, the last of the Empresses, the Empress Dowager, enjoyed tremendous power, as did the three Empresses before her. Historical narratives, as well as fiction, reveal some glimpses of this power and describe attempts of intriguing government officials to thwart that power. An example is contained in a short story dating to the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and titled "Good Fortune Waits on Courage." In that account, her Majesty, the Empress-Ruler Wu, had the Prime Minister beheaded, although he was innocent of the crime of which he was accused. His young nephew, the banished Minister of Public Works, collected his courage and went to meet the Empress to protest the injustice. This dialogue between the fabled Empress and the ousted young minister reveals the power of the Empress's position:

"Your uncle committed high treason, thus violating the established laws of the land, and incurred due punishment," Her Majesty declared severely. "What do you, in requesting an audience, desire to say?"

"I am here not to complain against the grave miscarriage of justice in the case of my uncle," he boldly replied, "but to give counsel to Your Majesty in order to assure the safety and happiness of your own future. Your Majesty came as bride to the imperial Li family and became later Empress. When His Majesty departed from this world, you succeeded as ruler, but since you are a woman it was your duty to have nominated a minister of state to act as regent, and, when the heir apparent later reached the age of majority, to permit him to ascend the throne as emperor, thus fulfilling both the will of Heaven and the hopes of the nation.

"To the contrary, not long after the lamented decease of His Majesty you elevated the rank of your own Wu family, ennobled several of its male members as princes, banished or executed the members of the imperial Li family, and usurped the title of Empress-Ruler, thus causing deep regret and anguish to the whole nation. My uncle, who was profoundly loyal to the imperial Li family, was falsely accused of high treason, bringing death to himself and to his family. I consider such a policy on the part of Your Majesty as very unwise and deplorable. It is my humble hope that Your Majesty restore the position of the Li family, welcome the return of the heir apparent, and in acting in this manner assure yourself of peaceful repose and the members of the Wu family a secure future. Otherwise, I am afraid, the situation will become very unfavourable to Your Majesty once the whole nation is driven into some action. The rebellion of An Lu-shan and others in the past should be a warning for us, and it is not yet too late for Your Majesty to consider and accept my words of advice."

"How dare you, you impudent young man, talk to me like this?" cried the Empress-Ruler with fury, and ordered that he be dragged away for punishment. [34]

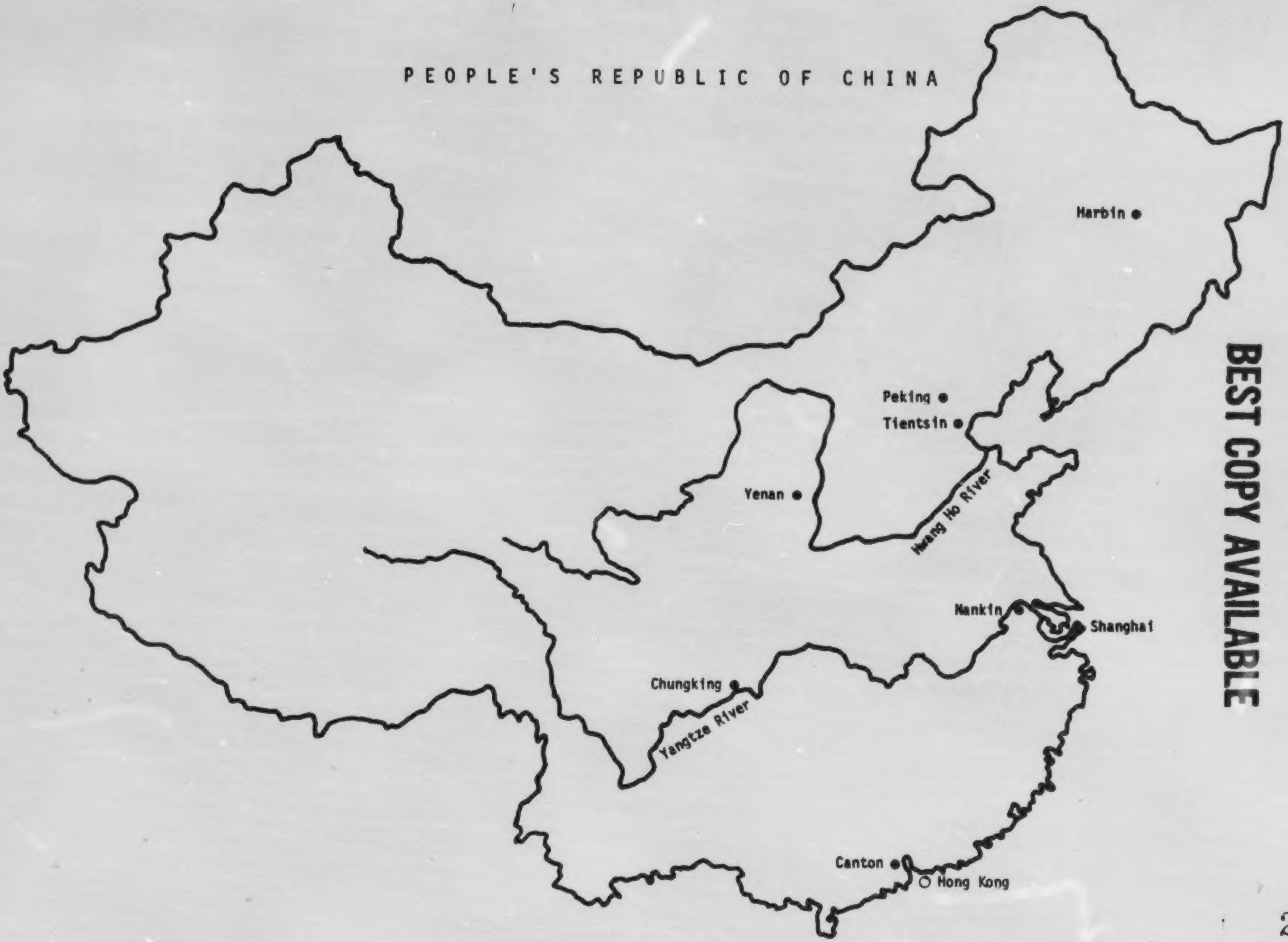
The most eloquent fictional portrayal of women's political power is to be found in Li Ju-Chen's "The Women's Kingdom," where women ruled supreme. As already mentioned, it is included among the student reading selections.

Some palace maids exerted influence on the Emperor or high government officials. There were occasions when such women were responsible for the banishment or even the death of high government officials. Here again, fiction reflects what may have happened in real life, as in the short story "The Faithful Handmaid." The former maid of an executed Prime Minister convinced the Emperor of his innocence and thus implicated severe punishment for the new Prime Minister. 35

Courtesans, too, are said to have had much indirect political power through their contact with the members of the royal court and the high government officials who visited them.

Background Information for Teachers

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA


Harbin
Peking
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Yenan
Hwang Ho River
Nankin
Shanghai
Chungking
Yangtze River
Canton
Hong Kong

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EVENTS SIGNIFICANT TO WOMEN IN CHINA
PRE AND POST PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CHINA

GENERAL	DATE	WOMEN
Establishment Manchu Dynasty	1644	
Europeans penetrate China	1840	Idea of female equality championed by a few
"Treaty system"	1850-64	
Taiping Rebellion. Movement grows in South to expel both Manchus and foreigners.	1899	Manchu Dynasty becoming increasingly westernized.
Overthrow of Manchu Dynasty. Chinese Republic proclaimed. Sun-Yat-sen reorganized Kuomintang.	1911	Women participate in revolutionary brigades. Constitution grants women the right to education.
Struggle for leadership within Nationalist Party. Warlords divide China; fight with each other.	1912	Women's movement appears as an independent organization of the May Fourth Movement. Attack on Confucianism. Movement for women's rights. Feminist journals appear.
World War I	1919	Women admitted to Peking University. Feminist Women's Rights Assns. formed in major cities. Call for women's suffrage and equality. Active participation and call for national liberation.
Chinese Communist party founded; included in Kuomintang	1921	Ideas of sexual equality accepted by urban intelligentsia.
Chiang Kai-shek assumes leadership of Kuomintang	1925	Women's movement split into (a) pacifists who emphasized and worked on social welfare and educational issues and (b) activists who participated either in Communist or Kuomintang activities.

GENERAL	DATE	WOMEN
Defeat of Worker's Revolution by Chiang and purge of Communists from Kuomintang. Red Army formed. Civil war begins.	1927	Women activists executed. Women's associations destroyed.
Japan seizes Manchuria from China.	1931	Kuomintang adopts civil code. Principle of freedom of marriage and divorce stated.
The Long March - Mao leads Communists to Yenan.	1934	Women recruited into Red Army. "Speak Bitterness" sessions.
Japan invades China. Alliance between Nationalists and Communists to defeat Japan. World War II.	1937	Women participate in fight against Japan through demonstrations and actual combat.
Communists and Nationalists resume fight.	1941	Women strike in cotton mills.
End of World War II - Japanese withdrawal from China.	1945	
Maoist victory over Kuomintang; Proclamation of People's Republic of China.	1949 Oct.	Radical change in women's position as Communists legislate new laws.
Chinese troops support North Korea in Korean War.	1950	New Marriage Law.
First Five Year Plan	1951	Campaign to enforce new women's rights.
	1953	Retrenchment in women's movement. Production quotas take precedent over feminist demands.
"Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom": Period of political relaxation; bitter criticism results	1956	
Mao halts political relaxation when Communist principles attacked.	1957	Purge from party of Ting Ling, women's rights leader.

GENERAL	DATE	WOMEN
Great Leap Forward. Attempt to increase production. Communes organized, small local factories built.	1958	Total mobilization of man and woman power. More day care centers, push to free women from housework so they can participate in work force.
Cultural Revolution; increased emphasis on revolutionary thought. Country on edge of civil war; army restores order.	1966	Women's rights become subordinate to class struggle.
Soviet and Chinese troops in skirmishes along border. Mao begins rapproachement with U.S.	1969	
Death of Mao Tse-tung. Chairman Hua Kuo-feng leads China.	1976	

The Overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty

By the mid-19th century the traditional political, social and economic system of China weakened. Western influences, including imperialism and the industrial revolution, coupled with the degeneration of the ruling classes hastened this decline. The Taiping Rebellion (1850 to 1864), one of China's worst civil wars, signaled the beginning of the end of the old order. The philosophy of the Taiping rebels -- including communal property and the equality of women and men -- came to fruition in the People's Republic in 1949.

Political unrest continued into the 20th century. Young people began to question the absolute authority of the family, which was the most powerful social institution of traditional China. Adherents of this "family revolution" called for choice of marriage partner, freedom of association, and sexual equality.

The "family revolution" coincided with a political revolution aimed at the overthrow of the last emperor of the Manchu dynasty. In 1911 progressive forces from the South succeeded in overthrowing the emperor and established a republic. In 1912 a popular revolutionary leader from a Christian family, Sun Yat-sen, became the first president of the new Chinese republic.

The Years of Transition

Sun Yat-sen's political theory was embodied in the Three People's Principles: nationalism, or sovereignty of the people; democracy, or the people's rights; and guaranteed livelihood, or the people's right to food and work. Sun also established the party called the Kuomintang in the South. But, peace did not come to China in his lifetime because of continuous fighting among strong warlords -- military men from all sections of China.

Although Sun considered Communism unsuitable for China, he accepted help from the Soviet Union and from the Chinese Communist Party in 1920 in order to resist the warlords and unify the country.

Coinciding with Sun's years of guidance was a search for a new culture to replace Confucianism. This was called the May Fourth Movement. University students and other youth who joined this and similar movements often demonstrated against and confronted Chinese government officials.

After Sun's death in 1925, a young Nationalist, Chiang Kai-shek, took over leadership of the Kuomintang. Chiang was a conservative Nationalist and a militarist who endorsed traditional Confucian beliefs. He was supported by the old Confucian gentry and the new merchant middle class.

The Nationalists opposed basic social reform and wanted to stop the Communists who were working to destroy the power base of the bourgeoisie, the gentry and the military. In 1927, Chiang launched a counter-revolution within the Kuomintang, and purged the government of all Communists.

This oppression of the Communist Party called for a new policy and an idealistic and energetic Mao Tse-tung supplied it. Mao had already put together a peasant army and now he urged the Communists to shift their power base from city workers to the countryside. In the period that followed, Mao developed tactics that are still used by many revolutionaries the world over. Combining a formula for guerrilla warfare with a program of land reform, mass re-education and organization, Mao and his Red Army struggled against Chiang and the Nationalists (Kuomintang).

In 1934 Mao and his Red Army (also called the 8th Route Army) led the Communists on what is now called the Long March. This march symbolizes for the Chinese the bravery and perseverance of the Communists. Pursued and harassed by Kuomintang troops, 100,000 Red Army troops left their base in South

Central China to seek refuge in the rocky hills of Yenan, 7,000 miles to the north. Fighting as they marched, only a tenth of the Army survived. In Yenan this tough group created a revolutionary base from which many of Mao's ideas were tried and expanded. Many Chinese were attracted by the goals of the Communists in this period and joined Mao at Yenan.

From 1937 to 1941 the Communists and the Nationalists had an uneasy partnership in the fight against the Japanese in World War II. But, by 1945 full-scale civil war erupted.

During thirty years of military struggle and turmoil, poverty and suffering continued to be the lot of most of the Chinese population. Thousands of people were driven from their homes by warring forces and became refugees. Thousands of Communists were murdered by the Nationalists and many government officials, feudal landlords, warlords and other members of bourgeois families were killed by the Communists. Brutality was reported on both sides. For four bloody years, the Communists steadily expanded their hold on the countryside until in 1949, in the final months of the war, as Mao later put it, "the cities fell like ripe fruit." Mao's victory ended almost 50 years of warfare.

The Years of Revolution

Through a series of planned reforms, the Communists set out to turn China from an underdeveloped country into a powerful Communist state. Progress in this regard has been uneven. A few major policies should be mentioned since they are referred to in the student's readings.

1. Mao's policy of collectivization.

> In an effort to increase agricultural production, individual land ownership has given way to collective cultivation of crops. Factories also came under collective ownership. This collectivism often was accomplished through the process of thought reform aimed at eliminating any "bourgeois, individualist" ideas the Chinese might harbor.

2. "Let a hundred flowers bloom."

   In 1956 Mao decided to court the educated scientists and technicians by relaxing his censorship of free thought. His slogan "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend" backfired when many Chinese took this opportunity to strongly criticize his regime. Mao then sharply halted this policy and initiated new "thought reform" sessions.

3. The Great Leap Forward.

   In 1957 Mao attempted to speed up the pace of economic progress by mobilizing the energy of the people in new ways. In this period, back-yard steel furnaces were built, 18 hour work days were tried, and people were forced to live in large urban and rural communes in an attempt to efficiently coordinate their time and their labor. The Great Leap Forward failed and economic progress actually lost as much as a decade of growth, causing some to call this period the "Great Slide Backwards." In these years, however, women were included in the work force and society was restructured to allow them to leave their homes.

4. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

   In 1966 there was an effort by Mao to reinforce the values of the Revolution in a population that was becoming set in its ways. Communist leaders with capitalistic tendencies were berated, hordes of Red Guard (Mao's own forces) travelled through the country reiterating Mao's thoughts from his "Little Red Book" and seeking out dissidents. The country came close to civil war and the army had to be called to quell outbreaks of fighting. Profound ideological differences appeared between the radicals and the pragmatics; these differences continue today.

A period of moderation followed the Cultural Revolution and Premier Chou En-lai launched a policy of reconciliation with the United States and Japan. Today many Americans visit China, although their travel usually is controlled.

Since Mao's death in 1976, China has been led by Party Chairman Hua Kuo-feng, who is trying to consolidate China behind his leadership.

Notes

1. Ch'ing-K'un Yang, *Chinese communist society: the family and the village* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1965), p. 105.

2. Quoted in Aline Wong, "Women in China: Past and Present," in Matthiasson, ed., *Many sisters: women in cross-cultural perspective* (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. 231.

3. *Ibid*.

4. Wei Yu-Hsin, *My revolutionary years: the autobiography of Madame Wei Tao-Ming* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), pp. 9-11.

5. Paul Ropp, "The Seeds of Change: Reflections on the Conditions of Women in the Early and Mid Ch'ing," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 2:1 (Autumn 1976), p. 8.

6. *Ibid*., p. 14.

7. Quoted in Ropp, *Op. cit*., p. 14.

8. Li Ju-chen, "The Women's Kingdom," in Chang, comp., *Chinese literature: popular fiction and drama* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1973), p. 430.

9. *Ibid*.

10. Linda Gordon, *The fourth mountain: women in China* (Somerville, Mass.: New England Free Press, 1973), p. 2.

11. Sue O'Sullivan, *The moon for dinner: changing relations...women in China* (London: Sue O'Sullivan, 1975), p. 2.

12. Ts'ao Chan, *Dream of the red chamber* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958), p. 40.

13. Kao Ming, "The Lute," in Chang, comp., *Op. cit*., p. 89.

14. Jacques Gernet, *Daily life in China on the eve of the Mongol invasion, 1250-1276* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), p. 85.

15. Paraphrased by Ropp, *Op. cit*., p. 6.

16. Gernet, *Op. cit*., p. 125.

17. *Ibid*., pp. 126-127.

18. Ropp, *Op. cit*., p. 13.

19. Wei Yu-Hsin, Op. cit., p. 139.

20. Marion J. Levy as quoted by Margery Wolf, "Chinese Women: Old Skills in a New Context," in Rosaldo and Lamphere, eds., Woman, culture and society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 161.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Anonymous, "The Shrew," in Chang, comp., Op. cit.

24. Anonymous courtesan, sometimes attributed to Li Ch'ing Chao, in Rexroth and Chung, The orchid boat (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 43.

25. Ann Oakley, Woman's work: the housewife, past and present (New York: Vintage, 1976), p. 20.

26. Gerda Lerner, The female experience: an American documentary (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977), pp. 53-54.

27. Jack Belden, "Gold Flower's Story: A Peasant Woman in the Chinese Revolution" (Somerville, Mass.: New England Free Press, n.d.), pp. 9-10.

28. Quoted by O'Sullivan, Op. cit., p. 11.

29. Yu-t'ang Lin, "Widow Chaun," in Widow, nun and courtesan: three novelettes from the Chinese (New York: The John Day Company, 1951), pp. 24-25.

30. Ching-Tsu Wu, The scholar, Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, trans. (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1972).

31. Delia Davin, "Women in the countryside of China." Paper presented for the Conference on Women in Chinese Society, San Francisco, June, n.d., pp. 14-15.

32. Ibid., p. 18.

33. Gordon, Op. cit., p. 10.

34. Anonymous, "Good Fortune Waits on Courage," in Yen, trans., Stories of old China (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, Ltd., 1974), pp. 21-22.

35. Anonymous, "The Faithful Handmaid," in Yen, trans., Op. cit., pp. 45-49.

Student Learning Materials: Traditional

Belden, Jack. China shakes the world. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970. 524pp. Paper. $4.95.

"A journalist's first-hand account of the Chinese civil war from 1946-1949. Gives a detailed account of both peasant life and reactions to the societal turmoil. Excellent chapters on women and revolution." (Young, p. 249.)

- Gold Flower's story (pp. 275-307).

  In pages 275-288 Gold Flower describes the early years of her life, her romantic love for the youthful Li-pao, her arranged marriage to an old man, her attempt to commit suicide rather than go through with the marriage, her reluctant surrender to her mother's will, and her marriage to a man she came to hate and detest.

  This is a very popular reading for young people. It is also available as a pamphlet, Gold Flower's story: a peasant woman in the Chinese revolution. Somerville, Mass.: New England Free Press, n.d. 43pp. Paper. $0.60 from the publisher, 60 Union Square, Somerville 02143. Appropriate page numbers here: 1-14.

Chan Tsao. Dream of the red chamber. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958. 574pp. Hardcover.

A novel about an extended family, the House of Chia, in 18th century China. The family "is a world in itself, complex and fascinating. Its population consists of those who serve and those who are served...There are hundreds of people altogether, and each of them manages somehow to be an individual at the same time that he (or she, for women dominate the plot) maintains relations with the whole society..." (Mark Van Doren's introduction, v).

Two central figures in the novel are Pao-yu and Black Jade. Brought up in an upper class household, their lives reveal the concern of wealthy families for the well-being of girls as well as boys. But there are limits imposed by the society. "It is a human organism that must obey the laws of its own survival; and it does so no matter what individual gets in its way." (Introduction, v.)

Of special interest are chapters 3 and 54-57. Chapter 3 describes Black Jade's introduction to her powerful grandmother and her first meeting with Pao-yu. Chapter 54 concerns Black Jade's illness and the matriarch's arrangement of a marriage for Pao-yu. Chapter 55 describes Pao-yu's illness, the concern of the household for his well-being, and Black Jade's fears of lasting separation from Pao-yu. Chapter 56 concerns the intrigues for Pao-yu's arranged marriage with another woman. In chapter 57, Pao-yu and Precious Virtue are married and come to love each other, while Black Jade dies.

The above readings are particularly revealing of the power of the grandmother and the powerlessness of the two young lovers, who resemble Romeo and Juliet.

Chang Hsin-chang, comp. Chinese literature: popular fiction and drama. Edinburgh: University Press, 1973. 466 pp. Hardcover.

- Anonymous. "The shrew" (pp. 32-55).
  A humorous tale of a "sharp-tongued" young woman's girlhood, her arranged marriage, and how she outraged her husband and his family by her ways. The marriage is renounced and she decides to become a nun. The tale illustrates how a woman gains power through her quick-witted speech, a common theme in traditional Chinese literature.
- Li Ju-chen. "The women's kingdom" (pp. 421-466).
  A satirical narrative about a kingdom of women where sex roles are reversed. "The men wear skirts and tunics and call themselves women and run the household, whereas the women wear boots and tall hats, call themselves men, and preside over public affairs."

  A young merchant finds himself in this kingdom and thinks that he will be able to sell a lot of cosmetics to the women, but he gets a big surprise, as he is chosen to be the royal concubine. He is forced to undergo an elaborate program of feminization: his feet are bound, his ears pierced, his face shaved and powdered. He suffers severe pain and extreme humiliation. The story was intended to be a criticism of these beautification practices and of the traditional Chinese view of women's role in society.

Myrdal, Jan. Report from a Chinese village. New York: Vintage Books, 1972. 374 pp. Paper. $2.95.

In a rather lengthy introduction, Myrdal explains his reasons for doing this book of interviews with people in a northern Chinese village in 1962, as well as his methods, biases and cautions about the personal accounts. This material is relevant to our concern with oral history. After a description of the village, the villagers speak for themselves. Part IV (pp. 203-242) deals with women. This book is considered a valuable reading for the transitional period in China, for teachers as well as students. It also is informative about traditional China.

- "Chia Ying-lan, the one who was sold, aged 53" (pp. 203-205).
  A very short reading about a woman whose poor family married her at a young age. Her husband became addicted to opium smoking; she was able to find work to feed herself and her young daughter until her husband sold them both to pay off his opium debts. She describes her relationship with the man who bought her, his death, and consequent changes in her life.

This is a good reading to use with the digging activity for aspects and degrees of power.

- "Tu Fang-lan, 'Don't hang us, father!,' aged 56" (pp. 206-211).

In the first part of this short reading, this woman tells of her childhood suffering from poverty, intensified by her father's gambling and drinking. She tells of her bound feet, arranged marriage, numerous child-births and deaths, and other sufferings.

This is another good reading to use with the digging activity. It can be analyzed line-by-line for manifestations of power and the lack of power.

The second part of the reading describes changes after the revolution. The teacher will want to leave this part for the change period.

Wei Yu-hsiu. My revolutionary years: the autobiography of Madame Wei Tao-ming. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943. 238 pp. Hardcover. Out-of-print.

Being rebellious and spirited by nature, the author participated in the 1911 Revolution that overthrew the reactionary Manchu dynasty and put in its stead a modern Chinese Republic. As an active member of the Kuomintang when only 15 years old, as a renowned lawyer, as one of the first women to be involved in Chinese foreign affairs before, during, and after World War I, and as a worker for China during its hostilities with Japan, Madame Wei Tao-ming is an inspiring example of an indefatigable Chinese feminist and revolutionary.

- Chapter 1, "An infant rebel" (pp. 1-16).

The childhood of a girl from a wealthy Mandarin family in the early 20th century is described in this chapter. It is revealing of life in an upper class family and the feelings of female members of the household.

Wu Ching-tzu. The scholars, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1972. 692 pp. Paper. $3.95.

An 18th century novel which, like Dream of the red chamber, is considered one of the landmarks in the development of the traditional Chinese novel. This is generally considered to be the best English translation.

The scholars was and is known for its feminist concerns. In this novel, the author portrayed educated women equal to men, and presented numerous strong-willed women. He satirized particularly a scholar who rejoices that his daughter died an honorable death.

- "Shen Chiung-chih sells her poems at Lucky Crossing bridge" (pp. 509-525).

A strong-willed woman escapes from concubinage and attempts to support herself by selling her poems in Nanking. The selection begins with Shen Chiung-chih's arrival with her father, a modest scholar, at the house of a salt merchant, to whom she is to be given in marriage. When she realizes that the merchant intends instead to take her as a concubine, she escapes and lives for a while by selling her poems. She is later captured in an attempt to return her to her "husband," but the attempt fails through her intelligent maneuvers.

- "The widow's suicide" (pp. 600-604).
  This episode was intended by the author to be a criticism of the tradition of widow suicide, a criticism brought out through the father, Mr. Wang. Although he first celebrates his daughter's virtuous conduct, he later comes to regret it, and in this way the author scorns Mr. Wang and others of his ilk. Discussion of the episode should bring out the author's point of view. Note also the social supports for this practice from the academic community, the local gentry and the authorities. Note who dissents from this practice: the girl's mother, her parents-in-law.

Yen, W.W., trans. Stories of old China. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, Ltd., 1974. 178 pp. Hardcover. $4.25.

"This collection consists of twenty-two short stories written in the Tang, Sung, Ming and Ching (Manchu) dynasties covering a period of 1300 years. The characters portrayed ...are representative of many facets of the life of old China." (Publisher's note). Dr. Yen translated the stories in 1942. The language is sometimes difficult to follow.

- Chiang Fang. "The heartless lover" (pp. 7-20).
  A short story about the tragic love between a high government official and a young courtesan. Her ghost haunts him after her death, spoiling his subsequent relationships and almost driving him insane.

  The story reveals some mysterious power of the courtesan.
- Anonymous. "Good fortune waits on courage" (pp. 21-26).
  A short story describing the power of the empress and the intrigues in the imperial household and among the ministers. A good illustration of the political power of women in old China.

Audiovisuals

City of Cathay. 1961. Color. 25 minutes. Free from Chinese Information Service, 159 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.

The camera follows a 37-foot-long scroll originally painted in the 11th century. Filled with a wealth of detail about people's daily life, the scroll gives a sense of reality to what may otherwise seem too far removed from students. It gives the impression that women were largely absent from this bustling scene, as it shows only a few upper class women who were, indeed, secluded. You will need to remind students that poor women did not stay at home (see the overview).

Peking remembered. 1967. Color. 40 minutes. $30.00 rental from Macmillan Films, Inc., 34 MacQuestern Parkway South, Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10550.

Using a combination of still and motion photography, this film can be used to give a feeling for life among the upper classes in Peking near the end of the 19th century. One part concerns the Empress Tzu Hsi and can be used as a basis for discussing this exceptional example of women's political power.

A town by the Yangtze. 1971. Color. 10 minutes. $10.00 from Pictura Films Distribution Corporation, 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011.

A beautiful film which will give students a feel for village life in traditional China as farmers, fishers, housewives, and others go about their daily chores. It may be necessary to remind students of some of the harsher realities which lay beneath the surface of this life.

Overview of Women in China: Continuity and Change

Nagat El-Sanabary
Carolyn Reese

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Concepts to Define:

- *proletarian*
- *communes*
- *conservative*
- *Communist*
- *Nationalist*
- *industrialization*
- *revolution*
- *equality*
- *Manchu Dynasty*
- *Kuomintang*
- *women's rights*
- *emancipation*
- *Karl Marx*
- *radical*

TEACHER'S NOTE: To introduce the unit, collect pictures of Chinese women today. (Some sources: posters from Chinese bookstores; magazines, such as China Pictorial, China Today.) Hang the pictures around the room and ask the students to identify indications of change in the activities or physical appearance of the women.

You may also show the film From War to Revolution which is an excellent portrayal of the military struggle in China that is especially revealing of the harsh realities of war. It is useful not only for its information value, but also for its visual revelation of the context within which women's roles were changing.

INFLUENCES BEHIND CHANGE

Change for women in China has been dramatic. Any change looks dramatic, of course, in comparison to China's "bitter past" when the social, economic and political systems depended upon women's oppression and exploitation. However, we can see how truly dramatic change has been, when we compare the significant power of women in China and their extensive participation in every aspect of their society with the power and participation of women in other nations. In fact, the position of women in modern China is a unique example of the result of a nation's commitment to equal status for women and men. China sees women's liberation as one aspect of revolutionary change; it does not separate the struggles of women from its national goals.

As advanced as China seems in respect to the status and power of women, we will find that some traditional restraints still remain.

Since the first struggles for women's rights began long before the Communist Party came to power, we will begin this overview with the period between the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911 and the complete victory of the Communists in 1949. This time span will be called The Years of Transition.

The establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of China in 1949 to the present will be called The Years of Revolution.

Before students look at the position of women in modern China, they should gain some understanding of the major events (years of social and political upheavals, appearance of the ideas of women's equality, establishment of Communist government in 1949, the Communist perception of women's role and position in society) which brought about pressure for change in the traditional life of women.

Years of Wars and Social Upheavals: The late 19th century until the establishment of the Communist government (People's Republic of China) in 1949 were years of extreme upheavals. The Manchu Dynasty was broken and new power structures struggled to replace it. There was civil and class warfare, and Japan invaded China.

In these disturbing years, traditional Chinese society fell apart. Nothing was certain except the fact that the old ways seemingly no longer worked. Ideas of basic social reform were hotly resisted by those who feared change. The life patterns of the Chinese were questioned and changed at the same time as millions were physically uprooted by the wars.

Ideas of Women's Equality: In concert with the breakdown of the old institutions came the introduction of new ideas.

We have already seen that several Chinese scholars opposed the oppressive conditions of women in feudal China. Their criticism of foot binding, arranged marriages, widow suicide and other traditional practices awakened women and men leaders to the need for change. These people became agents of change in the new era.

During the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), women had had a chance to agitate for changes in their position and role in society. Large numbers of women demonstrated, demanding as they did so the abolition of foot binding and equality of the sexes. Although they were not successful, their courage became a legend, and they set an example for other women to follow in the beginning of the 20th century.

Much of this rebellious thought was inspired by such Western ideas as Democracy, Communism, belief in the scientific approach, competitiveness, the dignity of the individual. By the end of the 19th century, Western missionary schools were influencing a number of Chinese to increase their criticism of traditional customs. These critics talked about reforming the traditional family structure, and other educated individuals became receptive to ideas of the equality between the sexes. These people followed the course of the suffragist movement in Britain and the United States and made women's rights an issue in their struggles against the old Chinese order.

The Victory of Communism in 1949: The culmination of these years of war and social struggle was the victory of the Red Army in 1949 and the creation of the People's Democratic Republic of China. Under the guidance of Mao, the Communists brought about vast changes in the structure of the lives of the Chinese. Some of the primary goals of the party were to stabilize China, to bring China out of its poverty and to establish a communist way of life. The Chinese feel that the accomplishment of these goals is still in process. To them, 1949 was merely the time of the "Liberation"; the "Revolution" still continues.

The Communist Perception of Women's Role and Position in Society: Chinese Communism established dramatic new guidelines for women. These were in sharp contrast to the traditional Confucian ideal. As we have seen earlier, Confucianism stressed obedience and chastity above any other female virtues. Communism viewed women as equal to men and considered the worth of both men and women to come from their contribution to society. While Confucianism advocated passivity and submission, Communism encouraged involvement and placed a great value on labor.

To illustrate the differences between Confucian and Communist ideology with regard to women, we chose a dialogue between a highly placed Chinese official and a young woman who espoused the Communist view of women. The selection is chosen from the autobiography of Han Suyin, Destination Chungking. In this incident, which occurred during the period of military struggle between the Nationalists and the Communists, a young woman, Lisan, confronts the government official. Both are at a dinner party in Han Suyin's home. The Chinese official first talks against the Communists:

> "They seduce the youth. They do not practice the Confucian virtues. They believe in free love; woman's chastity is violated."
>
> "A favorite accusation!" sneered Lisan. "You would keep woman's chastity sacred by holding her a slave, to be bought and sold, with a certain market value for virginity as for the lack of it. In Communist areas there is no prostitution and no concubinage. Men and women are equal and free. Among them there are true marriages, not contracts for the transfer of property."
>
> "The young lady seems to know a great deal about free love,"the official said, looking now at Lisan.
>
> She sprang up; her voice shook with anger. "Insult me! That is all you can do because you cannot answer me! Reactionary!" She spat the word, the strongest epithet in her vocabulary. She was crying now...Sobbing, she rushed into the house.
>
> ...Lisan came out of the house, a coat over her arm. She came slowly down the steps, as though making a stage entrance. She paused for the exact moment of suspense, then said, "I am going away."
>
> "Where will you go?" I asked (Han Suyin).
>
> "To -- friends ..." Her face quivered.
>
> "You have nothing to fear, Lisan. It is quite unnecessary for you to go."
>
> She shook her head. It was for her a great dramatic moment. She would be able to say afterward, "I could not stay. After I had defied a high official--told him the truth--I would have been arrested. I left that night alone--on foot.... I shall find a way yet to go to Yenan. If they turn me back, if they arrest me, I shall make the attempt again. They cannot stop me unless they shoot me!" 1

DISCUSSION: From the excerpt above, name some ways Communism influenced change in China. Notice that Lisan has an alternative to staying and being arrested by the government official. What did she mean when she said that she was going to Yenan? In old China what alternatives might she have if she had disgraced herself and her family by such an act of defiance? (Suicide, becoming over-submissive and over-conforming, going to a nunnery.)

The government official equated the new relationships between men and women with "free love." Have the students ever heard the argument that women will become sexually loose if they are given too much personal freedom?

TEACHER'S NOTE: You may wish to introduce the timeline of historical events and briefly describe some of the major events. Be sure to point out that these major occurrences were external events which influenced the lives and choices of the Chinese. In discussing Communism, remember that it varies in form from country to country and that the Communist attitude toward work, family and political participation will become clearer to the students as they study the changes and continuities in women's power in the pages ahead.

POLITICAL POWER

This section begins with political changes because in Communist China everything is seen as emanating from political events.

Focus Questions:

Has there been a change in society's political expectations of Chinese women?

Are there changes in the nature of women's political participation?

Identify:

- *ways in which women achieved political power;*
- *influences on the nature of women's current political power;*
- *spheres where Chinese women's political power has not increased.*

Years of Transition

TEACHER'S NOTE: It is helpful to use the timeline during the discussion of the years of transition.

In order to understand the process through which women in China achieved political power, it is necessary to study the dramatic changes in the political participation of women in the years of transition--the years between the breakdown of the old order (Manchu Dynasty) and the creation of the new order (People's Republic of China).

Women Join Political Movements: New ideas of women's equality pervaded the intellectual climate of the late 19th century and greatly affected the political roles of women. After the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty, such leaders as Sun Yat-sen encouraged an early women's movement. By the late 1920's, many ideas about sexual equality were accepted by the upper class.

The daughters of the rich became educated and eagerly accepted the ideals of Western political thought. They studied the French Revolution and were introduced to the ideas of Marx and Lenin. They read Western literature and the writings of the British and American suffrage movements. As a result, these educated women became quite political and joined such student movements as the "May Fourth Movement," which was an attack on Confucianism. Women joined with men to organize political unions, to stage mass demonstrations or to publish political papers. Young people of both sexes, too, demanded that there be a "family revolution" with sexual equality, the choice of marriage partners and a freedom of association. Since the family was an important source of authority and power in old China, attacks against this institution were clearly political acts.[2]

Some women formed women's rights organizations in major cities which were independent from the activities of the May Fourth Movement. They called for suffrage and equality. Several organizations to promote birth control were also formed following a 1922 visit to China by Margaret Sanger (an advocate of birth control in the U.S.).

In the mid-twenties, a split in the women's movement took place. One side became non-political, while the other became extremely political. Those with non-political inclinations concentrated their efforts on social welfare and education. Those with political motivation participated either in the Kuomintang or in Communist activities. Therefore there were some women who believed in reform within the system and others who believed in revolution.

Women Activists are Brutalized: This seemingly gradual ascendancy of women into the political life of China was abruptly halted, however, by Chiang Kai-shek, the new leader of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang). Chiang was a military man and represented the continuing power of the Confucian tradition whose advocates were fearful of the new political position of women. In 1927 Chiang initiated a regime of brutality against women activists; some women's noses and breasts were cut off, some were beheaded, some were imprisoned. As a result, after 1927 women were no longer a vital part of the Nationalist Party and politically active women increasingly looked to the Communist Party for support.

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Following is a description of the life of a wealthy woman called Chang-Siao-hung. She lived in these years when new ideas brought political change and opened new avenues for women. Notice the numerous external occurrences that influenced Chang's life. Some are major political events, such as the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty. Others are more minor influences, such as the fact that by living with her older sister she could see *how marriage might degrade and weaken women. In the latter case, undoubtedly it was Chang's introduction through her studies to the possibility that marriage could be different that allowed her to question traditional marriage.*

List the events which influenced Chang's political ideas. Notice how her new ideas influenced her subsequent decisions.

TEACHER'S NOTE: In Agnes Smedley's book, Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution *there are numerous good first-person accounts in which women talk about the important influences on their lives.*

When I was a child the Manchu Dynasty was overthrown and a flood of new ideas poured through my country. Men and boys cut off their cues, the symbol of subjection, and women and girls in the centers of ferment no longer bound their feet. My own feet were never bound.

But one of the most important periods of my life began May 4, 1919, when I was sixteen years of age. One of my sisters had married a number of years before and was living in Canton where her husband was a high official. She was fortunate that her husband's family lived in Swatow and that she could have her own individual home in Canton. But she was very unhappy because her life was one endless round of bearing children. She now had seven children and each year a new one arrived, leaving her weaker and in deeper despair. Her husband spent most of his life at banquets of officials, in gambling and with sing-song girls.

My mother had permitted me to go to Canton and live with my sister during my period of study in the middle school. It was here that I was living when the May Fourth Movement was begun by the students and professors of Peking National University. They held great demonstrations against the Peace Conference of Versailles when the imperialist powers posing as China's friends set their seals of approval upon Japanese occupation of Chinese territory and upon the infamous Twenty-one Demands which Japan had forced upon the old corrupt Peking Government. This forced the Chinese delegates to withdraw from the Peace Conference.

But for the youth of China, especially the intellectual youth, the May Fourth Movement was more than political. It came closely upon the heels of the great October Revolution in Russia, bringing with it a reappraisal of all social values;

and it dealt a death blow to feudal ideas in the intellectual young. In Canton the students were much more free and vigorous than those in British Hong Kong, and I was intoxicated by this movement. It was like a fresh, invigorating breeze through a musty and ancient dwelling.

The leading professors and students of Peking National University were publishing the New Youth, a magazine that introduced the intellectual renaissance into China. One of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party was its editor. Through this magazine I came into contact with Marxian doctrine and began the serious study of the social sciences. I was at the time a member of the Kwangtung Students' Union, which was very radical, and I became one of its leaders.

In that year we students of Canton organized schools for poor children, and from this time onward I learned not merely to pity and sympathize with the poor but to place my knowledge at their disposal, to serve them because all that I enjoyed in life came out of their bodies. And during the two following years in Canton, I spent almost all my free time out of school as a teacher in the workers' night schools. I never seemed to tire, for the workers who came to study were like the thirsty seeking water in a desert.

This same period of my life, filled with hard work and a great purpose, was also filled with great struggles with my family. With the exception of my two sisters, both of whom were unhappily married, every member of my large family tried to force me into marriage. It was not merely my mother who pleaded with me, the tears rolling down her cheeks, but it was my brothers, my uncles, aunts, cousins, and all the variations of these relatives, until about a hundred people were bent upon the one goal of rescuing me from my "dangerous tendencies" and binding me into a marriage with some young millionaire. Repeatedly I refused to marry, but my mother would only seek some other young millionaire whom she thought would please me more. Every visit to my Hong Kong home was filled with misery and struggle; every visit my relatives made to my sister's home in Canton, every letter that came to me, were filled with new suffering for me.

But I refused, with firm decision, to marry, and I was determined to study, become a physician, and serve the workers and peasants of China. This struggle with my family was my first great struggle with feudalistic influences, and it was a fearful struggle that closed in upon me from every direction

> for a period of over two years.
>
> I was eighteen when my eldest sister, married to a high official in the Peking Government, secretly sent me money to escape from Canton and go to her in Peking. One day I left Canton, went to Hong Kong, boarded a ship without the knowledge of my family, and left. For many years I did not return. From Peking I wrote my mother, asking her for money to study medicine in Peking, and threatening, if she refused, never to see her again. Finally, her love for me prevailed, and she bowed her sad, confused head to my wishes.
>
> In Peking I became a student in the famous Peking National University, and along with my preparatory studies for the profession of medicine I began the thorough and serious study of Marxism. I read many books, many short stories and articles, many translations; and I came into intimate contact with writers for such publications as New Youth and Creative Society.[3]

Women Are Part of the Military Struggle: Of great importance to the growing strength of the political power of women was their participation in the military struggles which characterized these years of transition. For example, hundreds of thousands of women took part in the revolution of 1911 to emancipate themselves from the conditions and traditions they had lived under for centuries. It was of enormous value for women to leave the isolation of their homes to take part in struggles which promised a change in their economic and personal condition.

China was divided by civil war from 1927-1937, and the role of women in this period differed considerably from one region to another depending largely on the kind of political control leaders exercised over each region. In the regions under Chiang Kai-shek's control, women remained victims of the feudal system and change in their position came about very slowly. In the regions controlled by Communists, women gained more power and changes in their position were dramatic, since the Communist Party and the 8th Route Army were committed to the equality of women.

However, not all revolutionary women were supporters of the Communists. There was an ideological split between women, corresponding to the split between the revolutionaries, and women participated on both ends of the spectrum. Heroic struggles by women were reported on both the Communist and Kuomintang sides.

With the occupation of China by Japan, however, women from both sides united against the enemy. Beneath their differences lay a common dream of avenging themselves and changing the feudal conditions that oppressed both women and men. Some women were happy to carry arms to help bring about the desired change. Some were unaware of ideological commitments but were willing to join those who were kind to them and offered to help them and other suffering women.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES: After students have read the following account of the life of "Misu, the Guerilla Girl," by Jack Belden, ask them to respond in writing to this question: should women be trained to fight in the Armed Forces? See if there is a differential response between the women and men in the class. Lead a discussion on this question of women in the military.

Students could also do research on the participation of women in movements which espouse radical change for women in other countries (examples: Algeria, Cuba, North Viet Nam, Angola).

Compare the military participation of women in China with the role of African women in their independence movement. In both cases, women were willing to put their lives on the line for their "independence." But what are the differences in their goals of independence? Note that in both cases military involvement gave women new forms of respect and power.

Jack Belden met Misu and reported on his impressions of her in his book China Shakes the World. He refers to her as "Guerilla Girl." He notices her carrying a pistol among the militia men and he spent several hours interviewing her and learning why she had joined the 8th Route Army. He described her as follows:

> She was quite husky and looked almost like a masquerading boy, with stocky legs and heavy shoulders. Possibly nineteen. She had deep red cheeks and straight hair that feel to her shoulders in a bob, and she had a sensuous mouth.

She wore a pair of torn gray cotton pants, stained with recent mud and a wine colored jacket, filthy from the drippings from many millet bowls. She was the daughter of a tenant farmer who had gone blind when she was young. Two of her sisters had starved to death in a famine and she had only kept alive by living in the fields with her grandmother and eating raw vegetables.

When Misu was twelve, the chief of her village had conscripted her to work on a road for the Japanese. At the hands of the Chinese overseer, she had suffered daily beatings, traces of which her body still bore. When she was fifteen or sixteen, she had been betrothed to a boy one year her junior. Because most of her family was starving, she went immediately to her in-laws' house, becoming not so much a wife as a maidservant. She never ate with the others, but only what they left, and that was never much. Whenever she had an argument with her husband, he ran and told his mother and the two of them beat her unmercifully. They beat her on the back, on the legs and on the breasts, all the while telling her that she was a most ungrateful girl.

Her husband worked as a clerk for the Japanese Army and often Japanese officers came to visit her mother-in-law who made her serve the officers tea and cakes. She rebelled against these duties, for the Japanese generally molested her. After one such refusal, she was beaten in a particularly brutal fashion. In despair, she locked herself in her room, tied a rope over a beam and hanged herself. She lost consciousness, but woke up some hours later, the broken rope around her neck and her bed smeared with blood.

Afterward, she was sick and could not work well. As a consequence, she was beaten even more severely and deprived of almost all food. Despairing of her life, she ran home. Her mother- and father-in-law followed and broke into her house. Her grandmother fought viciously to prevent her from being taken away, but was beaten insensible to the ground. Neighbors came to her rescue. From then on she lived at home with her grandmother, the two of them, as before, eking out a starvation diet from the vegetables they grew on their small plot of ground. From time to time, however, her husband and mother-in-law caught her and beat her and she went in constant fear of being kidnapped.

About this time, the Japanese retreated and the 8th Route Army, which had occupied the hills around Kwangtai, entered the town.

One day a girl cadre came to her home and said: "Your neighbors tell me you have suffered much. Now a new day has come for Chinese women and there is no longer any need for you to suffer."

Because no one had ever shown her any sympathy before, Misu was completely won over by the cadre's kindness. She confided her hopes to her grandmother -- her only friend. The old woman agreed it would be wonderful if women were the equal of men, but dashed cold water on Misu's hopes. "From ancient times till now," she said, "man has been the Heaven, woman the earth. What chance do we have?"

Misu told her grandmother's words to the cadre. "You must organize," said the cadre. "If we form a Women's Association and everyone tells their bitterness in public, no one will dare to oppress you or any women again."

Much moved, the girl threw herself wholeheartedly into the work of organizing the women on her street. Because of her zeal she was elected head of the Women's Association on her block. Through the aid of this association, she succeeded in obtaining a divorce from her husband.

About this time, the civil war started. Kwangtai organized its own militia. The girl used to sit by the militiamen and watch them clean their guns. Soon she was cleaning the gun of each armed man on her street. As a joke, they taught her how to fire a rifle, but always without bullets. In the meantime, the new government to alleviate her poverty gave her some millet. She was very happy.

In 1946, the Kuomintang armies, having entered the North China Plain below, decided to attack and occupy Kwangtai and eliminate any threat from guerillas in the Taihang Mountains. Many people left the city. Misu went along, helping other women find homes and obtaining cotton for them so that they could spin and make enough money to keep alive.

Later, she returned to within a mile of her native Kwangtai and volunteered her services to a band of militiamen. They laughed at her. She persisted. Finally they allowed her to help with the cooking and to mend clothes. Soon she began to do espionage work, binding up her hair like a married woman, entering the town and gathering information.

On New Year's Eve, she left a note written by the county magistrate in a basket of candy and cigarettes outside a Kuomintang blockhouse. "We know you have been impressed into service," said the note, "so we bear you no enmity. If things get too hard, run over here to us." As a result, two Kuomintang soldiers had come over.

Misu was very proud, but still not satisfied, because she had done no fighting. She trained herself for combat by shooting dogs in the hills. "Wolves,"

> she told all who questioned her. Later, she overcame her fear of hand grenades by standing on rocky ledges and throwing them into the river far below. After that the farmers let her carry arms and go on raids.
>
> Because she knew Kwangtai well, she soon came to plan most of the raids. On such raids, she generally acted as the lookout for the militiamen. Once, however, she climbed over the wall of Kwangtai and participated in a gun fight with members of the Home Returning Corps organized by the Kuomintang. On this occasion two of the enemy were killed. "Maybe I shot one of them; I don't know," she said.
>
> This girl could neither read nor write. She knew nothing of Communism. She had taken up arms, she said, because the soldiers of the 8th Route Army were the first who had ever been kind to the people of Kwangtai. If the 8th Route Army were beaten, her life would not be worth living. After peace came, she had high hopes of a better life. She was not ambitious. She just wanted to be a working girl. She thought China could build up industry and she could work in a factory. That would give her great satisfaction.[4]

The Communists Recruit Women: After the Japanese were defeated and expelled from the country, the Communists and Nationalists resumed their bloody battle for control of China.

The Communists were determined to destroy the traditional socio-economic and political structure, and give all power to the people. Since women made up half the population of China, the Communists sought to mobilize women as well as men to destroy the old and build a new order.

Mao Tse-tung, the leader of the Communist party, was an ardent advocate of women's rights. He was particularly repelled by the prevalence of suicide among women and in 1919 wrote nine impassioned articles about it.

Because of the strong commitment of the Communists to women's rights, women from wealthy and poor families alike were attracted to Communism. Daughters of wealthy landlords or merchants repudiated their families and joined the Communist forces. To politicize the peasant women, whenever the 8th Route Army entered a village, they encouraged women to form women's associations.

Mao Tse-tung praised the revolutionary spirit of these peasant women as early as 1927, when he stated that:

> When women all over the country rise up, that will be the day of victory for the Chinese revolution.[5]

Many Communist women became party members, members of propaganda corps, political organizers, army nurses and soldiers. A few women gained positions of power in government; some served on the high council of the Coalition government and many joined the civil service. There were also numerous stories of heroic missions by women who carried ammunition to fighting forces throughout China.[6]

The Communists felt that by raising the political consciousness of women they could turn them into an effective force against the Nationalists. They also felt that through the process of political participation women would learn the means for effecting their own liberation.

Speak Bitterness Sessions Activate Women: One way to assist women in this change was to create "Speak Bitterness" sessions in the towns under Communist control. In these sessions, women recounted the horror stories of their treatment by husbands and in-laws. These were more dramatic than the encounter sessions that are now familiar to people in the U.S.[7] In the beginning, women were reluctant to talk because of fear and repression, but when they found that they had the full support of the other women in the women's associations, they came forward and told their stories and encouraged others to do the same.

In these "Speak Bitterness" sessions, wives and daughters-in-law, unhampered by the presence of their menfolk, spoke up and voiced the acrimony they felt toward their abusers. They would encourage their poor sisters to do likewise, and thus help bring to the whole village the courage of "half of China," as the enlightened women liked to call themselves. The idea was that "by speaking pain to recall pain," the women would find out that they shared similar grievances. By having a chance to speak in public, they also realized that they were good at it, especially with the support of other women in the women's associations.[8]

However, the women discovered that the more they participated in these meetings, the more resistance they faced from their menfolk. Hinton learned of the obstacles that faced women in his study of a Chinese village as he reported:

> But women found out as they organized among themselves, attended meetings and entered into public life, that they met more and more opposition from the men, particularly from the men in their own households, most of whom regarded any activity by wives or daughters-in-law outside the home as "steps leading directly to adultery."[9]

Nevertheless, the women did not give up. They used the support of other women to overcome the obstacles and resistance that faced them. They gained a new sense of political power and they were determined to use it. They learned before their Western sisters did that sisterhood is powerful. In these meetings, the women learned new ways to deal with their oppressors and change their attitudes toward and treatment of them. Sometimes the women would actually beat a husband or father-in-law who was mistreating a woman in his family, but in other instances this was unnecessary. Often just talking to the husband or in-law and threatening retaliation sufficed to stop the cruel treatment of the wife. The first measure is recounted eloquently by Jack Belden in "Gold Flower's Story," and in other stories about this period of the military struggle. The following excerpt from Fanchen reveals the way the women's association brought about changes in women's lives.

> Among those who were beaten was poor peasant Man-ts'ang's wife. When she came home from a women's association meeting, her husband beat her as a matter of course, shouting, "I'll teach you to stay home. I'll mend your rascal ways." But Man-ts'ang's wife surprised her lord and master. Instead of staying home thereafter as a dutiful chattel, she went the very next day to the secretary of the women's association, militiaman Ta-hung's wife, and registered a complaint against her husband. After a discussion with members of the executive committee, the secretary called a meeting of the women in the whole village.

> At least a third, perhaps even half of them, showed up. In front of this unprecedented gathering of determined women a demand was made that Man-ts'ang explain his actions. Man-ts'ang, arrogant and unbowed, readily complied. He said that he beat his wife because she went to meetings and "the only reason women go to meetings is to gain a free hand for flirtation and seduction."
>
> This remark aroused a furious protest from the women assembled before him. Words soon led to deeds. They rushed at him from all sides, knocked him down, kicked him, tore his clothes, scratched his face, pulled his hair and pummelled him until he could no longer breathe. "Beat her, will you? Beat her, and slander us all, will you? Maybe this will teach you."
>
> "Stop, I'll never beat her again," gasped the panic-stricken husband who was on the verge of fainting under their blows.
>
> They stopped, let him up, and sent him home with a warning--let him so much as lay a finger on his wife again and he would receive more of the same "cure."
>
> From that day onward Man-ts'ang never dared beat his wife and from that day onward his wife became known to the whole village by her maiden name, Ch'eng Ai'lien, instead of simply by the title of Man-ts'ang's wife, as had been the custom since time began.[10]

The fact that Ch'eng Ai'lien could now use her own name is a significant change. In feudal China women were always referred to as So-and-So's wife, So-and-So's mother, or daughter-in-law.

COMPARISON: Wife beating was commonly practiced in Africa as a way to keep women in line, although extreme violence was never sanctioned. The physical abuse of wives by their husbands is common in many cultures.

Today the issue of wife beating is undergoing international scrutiny. Some countries, notably England, have set up "safe" homes run by women which offer a refuge for a woman to live with her children until she may support herself or work out the problem with the man who beats her.

In a Ms. magazine issue on battered wives (August 1976), two proverbs are quoted: "A wife may love a husband who never beats her, but she does not respect him"--Russian proverb; and "A spaniel, a woman and a walnut tree, the more they're beaten the better they be"--old English proverb.

In America the attitudes toward both wife beating and rape are similar. Often victims of both are believed to have provoked the assault. In the following quote from Ingrid, a 34-year-old American woman, note the difference between the response society gave her and the support the Chinese women's association gave Ch'eng Ai'lien.

> You get into things like this one step at a time. It's not a big step from abandoning your preference in movies to going along with your husband's preferences emotionally. My husband knew I could beat him verbally; he had fists and economic power. When he was out of verbal ammunition, he'd hit me. I had no comparable resource. I was in psychoanalysis and group therapy and at no time did the group take seriously what was happening to me. It was: What had I done? What had I said? The problem was my self-improvement. Twice, I called the police. They came, put their arms around his shoulder and asked him, "What seems to be the trouble?" I said I wanted him out. They said, "He's your husband, isn't he?" The second time, they told me I could get an order of protection in the morning. But the problem isn't the next day. Women are killed in their homes because no one takes seriously that they are in danger...I think the men get into it because there are no checks on it--and they know it.[11]

Years of Revolution

Women's Political Role Is Important: After it came to power, the Chinese Communist party continued to recognize the important political role of women. It made systematic efforts to recruit women and organize them for political participation. In April 1949, an All-China Democratic Women's Federation (ACDWF) was created as the leading organization in China's women's movement. It played an important role in drawing up policies that would encourage the increased economic participation of women in accordance with the national economic plan.

The ACDWF functioned through a system of elected women's congresses that included women delegates who were directly elected from each residential district. By 1950, every province, county, sub-district, city, town and village had a woman's representative congress. So did every professional and occupational organization and school with women members. The membership of the organization grew rapidly, and by 1953 had grown to 76 million women.[12]

Women were also organized into peasant associations and trade unions, where they were placed in important positions. Other new reforms were included granting women the vote, and prohibiting prostitution and female infanticide.

Women began to play a major role in public life, both at the local and at the national level. By the mid-fifties, several women were occupying important cabinet positions, as reported in the New York Times in 1957:

> The Minister of Health, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Overseas Chinese Affairs, the Minister for the Textile Industry and the Head of the Foreign Ministry Press Section are all women; Madam Chiang Kai-Shek's sister, the redoubtable Madam (Sun Yat-Sen) Soong Ching-Ling, is one of the nation's six vice-presidents.[13]

Everyone Is Included in Politics: The women's movement is no longer confined to the educated elements of the urban middle and upper classes. The goal of broadening the Communist women's movement so that it embraces the entire female population is clearly set forth in the "General Principles for the Organization of the Council of Women's Representatives" that was passed in September 1950 by the executive committee of the ACDWF at their third meeting. According to the resolution, the Council of Women's Representatives was to be the chief instrument by which the Democratic Women's League would direct the "broad masses of women" in the country, and any woman with citizenship rights who supports the principles of the League would have the privilege to elect or be elected to the Council. The goal was to expand the "women's organization to the masses." Every province, county, sub-district, city, town, and village therefore has a council, as has every profession and occupation, every large organization employing women, and every organization and every school with women members. The organization thus permeates every territory and occupational unit in the country to help transmit and implement government policies, and to bring women's demands and opinions to the attention of the government.[14]

Complete Political Equality Is Not a Reality: Women continue to make gains in the political as well as in other spheres, but complete equality is far from being a reality. Women are behind men in holding key influential positions. For example, the army, high political posts and high management jobs generally lack women representatives. This situation is partly bolstered by the Chinese feeling that there are some inherent differences between men and women--not only physical, but emotional and probably intellectual.

Julia Kristeva, in her study of Chinese women, stated that sex role differentiations still exist in China, with women still being under-represented in leadership positions. There are no women, for example, in the People's Army of China; they serve only in liaison, administrative or medical capacities. The People's Militia does not enroll women, and young women in particular are not included. Kristeva indicated that during her visit to China, she and other members of her group did not see a single armed woman in the cities or the countryside, although the number of soldiers they saw was very small anyway.[15]

Also, we cannot ignore the fact that the Chinese government has not been consistent in its support of women's growth outside the home. In periods when production is down, the current political line is often that women can best serve the state by tending to the needs of their families at home.

> *COMPARISON: There are some similarities with the situation of women in America. In times of war, women are given incentives to work, such as government day care centers and good paying "male" jobs; however, when the war is over and men return, women lose their jobs or are strongly "encouraged" to return home.*

Women's Rights Are Part of Class Struggle: Generally, however, women's rights in China are not separated from the total progress of the rights of both men and women. It is assumed that if the position of women is enhanced, the whole country will benefit. This is a fundamental difference between the women's movement in China and in the U.S. In China, this movement comes primarily as a reaction to the recent past and, as such, is an act against the feudal suppression of one group, or class, by another. From this viewpoint, men and women can be seen as standing together and working together to break the chains of the past. Their overall struggle against feudalism includes striving for women to be more productive and esteemed in China. The attempt to secure women's rights in China is not generally viewed as a separate issue from class struggle.

In addition, happiness for women and men in China is not seen as something personal, but is viewed as serving the people. The Chinese feel that their revolution has just begun. As Wei Feng-Ying states, "I have the female problems of love, marriage, children, but I always put the revolution first."[16]

As we look at the situation of women's movements either in developing countries or within minority groups in the United States, perhaps we will see that women's struggle, as the Chinese example demonstrates, is not and cannot be a separate reality from class or racial struggle.

DISCUSSION: Can students describe how the issue of women's rights is seen in America? Women here often are forced to become adversaries of men in their struggle for equality. Also, since there is no national commitment to the achievement of equality for all people in America, different groups striving for their basic rights may clash with each other rather than working together in concert.

PERSONAL POWER

Focus Questions:

In looking at continuities and changes in the personal power of Chinese women, notice whether they have gained more control over

- *the use of their bodies;*
- *the people to whom they relate;*
- *whom they marry;*
- *whether or not to have children;*
- *the decision to divorce;*
- *the decision to remarry;*
- *where they live.*

In what ways do women have more power than previously?

In what ways do women have less power than previously?

When we think of the personal power of Chinese women, we must describe it in terms of the freedoms that women have now in contrast to the constraints on women in feudal China. It is true that most people in China do not have the kinds of personal freedoms and self-expression that many Americans are used to, but when we study recent Chinese culture we should be aware of how far China has travelled from its "bitter past." The Chinese themselves use the past as a yardstick to measure China's progress, rather than the situation of other countries.

This quote from Mao Tse-tung in 1959 indicates how far the Communists felt that women still had to go to feel and act equal to men in the society. Notice how Mao felt that the culture and custom of old China had to be erased before women could gain real power.

> Of course it was necessary to give them (women) legal equality to begin with. But from there on, everything still remains to be done. The thought, culture, and customs which brought China to where we found her must disappear, and the thought, customs and culture of proletarian China, which does not yet exist, must appear. The Chinese woman does not yet exist either, among the masses; but she is beginning to want to exist. And then to liberate women is not to manufacture washing machines -- and to liberate their husbands is not to manufacture bicycles but to build the Moscow subway.[17]

DISCUSSION: What do you think Mao meant when he said, "to liberate women is not to manufacture washing machines" and "to liberate their husbands is not to manufacture bicycles but to build the Moscow subway"?

Years of Transition

In China, access to a modern education may be seen as personal power because education is used consciously by the Chinese as a way to socialize people to the new concepts of their new society. The Speak Bitterness sessions served the same function.

Class Differences in Education: In the years of transition, the Constitution of the Chinese Republic of 1912 gave women the right to education. Peking University opened its doors for women for the first time in 1919. However, schooling was expensive, and education was therefore reserved for those who could afford it. Further, co-education was often hotly resisted by upper class parents.

But those women who were allowed to receive a university education had a unique opportunity to develop themselves intellectually as well as socially. In the following eloquent account by Han Suyin, notice that the personal freedom she found in her new life at the University of Peking was as important to her as the intellectual stimulation.

> There was new freedom for our generation. We escaped the restraint of conservative homes to find release and stimulus in the university. The campus was beautiful with its cropped grass and waving trees, its small river with islands, its pagoda tower, its buildings after the style of ancient palaces. Learned men from foreign countries as well as the best minds of China were our teachers. Books in our own tongue and books from all the world were in the libraries for us. In those immense stone halls, silent save for the rustle of many books, we discovered the thrill of new knowledge. We would discuss eagerly among ourselves philosophy, political science, religion -- all was new, exciting; nothing was difficult for us. We were learning to fashion a new world free of ancient feuds and prejudices, and the feat seemed easy of accomplishment, we were so young and confident.
>
> Traditional barriers of constraint between boy and girl melted away in an atmosphere of easy comradeship. We shared classes and discussion. We would gather in the evenings in the raftered hall of some old Peking mansion, a hundred of us, two hundred or more, so spacious were the rooms; the girls in flowered dresses, slim, sheath-fitted Shan, with flowers in their hair. There would be music and dancing in the Western style, boy and girl together. In groups we picknicked on the smooth grass by the river that wound through the campus. We read Li Po's poems under the willows in the blazing autumn moonlight (the moon is so brilliant in Peking) by the banks of the peihai lakes. We took pleasure-boats, poled along lazily on the canals

> under the camel-backed bridges, thrusting among lotus
> flowers upheld like lanterns, swaying, above their
> flat green leaves. There would be distant faint
> whisperings of a lute, or the thin music of the
> four-stringed chin, or a strain from an ancient
> love song...[18]

In the districts that were under the control of the Communists, poor women did receive an education that consisted not only of reading and writing but also of the practical skills of farming and crafts. Individual involvement was emphasized, and it became an obligation for every literate person to teach others not only reading and writing but also the principles of Communism. Women were eager to learn and teach others, and they benefited considerably from this program in which even older women participated. If such participation was opposed by the woman's family, other members of the women's association aided her with their support.

Years of Revolution

Everyone Learns to Read: The People's Democratic Republic of China inherited an illiterate population when it was established in 1949. Illiteracy was very high among both males and females, but it was much higher among females.

School learning is only one aspect of education in China. Non-formal or out-of-school education assumes major importance in all Communist countries, since instilling the Communist ideology in all segments and all ages of the population is very important. It is society's way of socializing its citizens to its new way of thinking and preparing them for the roles they are expected to play in the social and economic life of the family, community and wider society. Literacy campaigns thus were organized all over the country after 1949, because people had to be able to read the Communist literature to understand the new ideology. Posters and propaganda materials also played an important role in repudiating Confucian ideology and instilling Maoist thought among the people. In 1950, the Shanghai textile factories, where the majority of the employees were women, organized 170 literacy groups, with a total membership of 9,000. Larger numbers of women also participated in literacy programs in other cities and towns. In 1958, 16 million women passed their literacy tests.[19] Major progress has been achieved in combating illiteracy during the past 20 years.

Pre-School Education: Another major thrust in Chinese education has been the emphasis on pre-school education. It is through this means the children are reached in their formative years and socialized in the Communist ideology. Even very young children are taught the Communist ideology so that they will be "armed with Chairman Mao's thought."[20] At this age, too, children are introduced to military training, reportedly in a manner that discourages aggression in personal relationships, as several visitors to China have indicated. The children are also taught how to take care of themselves and each other. Children seem to be very happy and easy going in school and out of it, or as Robert Guillain said:

> When I am asked if the Chinese of today are happier than those of yesterday, there is at least one answer that I can give with certainty. That is that the Chinese children have never been as happy as they are today; or as clean, as well dressed, and as well behaved; or as cheering a sight.[21]

Chinese Education Is Pragmatic: In the upper grades in primary and secondary schools, students make products that are sold in the markets. They also work in the fields and help improve the countryside. Thus, the Chinese have been able to integrate education with productive labor.

DISCUSSION: Chinese education is very pragmatic. That is, people tend to be trained for certain needs in certain spheres. Students have little choice in what they are to study and may be given concentrated courses so that they may quickly be taught a needed skill. This is how China's "barefoot" doctors are trained. Of course, the government pays all the costs of such an education.

What do students think of this sort of work-study approach?

Can students see why it is in the interests of a rapidly expanding, developing country to educate this way? What *are the differences between the situations in China and in America?*

Differences Between the Numbers of Boys and Girls in School: Although the schools train both sexes to enter the same job market, the Communist regime has not yet been able to wipe out the disparities in educational opportunities for males and females that have existed for centuries. It has been reported that in 1960 slightly over one-third of the students enrolled in primary schools were girls, and about 23 percent of university students were women. Fewer girls than boys continue their education beyond primary school.[22]

COMPARISON: In most countries the lower percentage of girls to boys in school, particularly on the university level, has remained. Compare the situation of Africa, where the education of girls was often resisted, with China where it was encouraged.

DISCUSSION:

What attitudes do you think parents (in China, in Africa, in America) might have against the education of girls? Do you think these attitudes are relevant today?

Although university education is limited for both males and females, women have made progress in gaining access to fields of study that were formerly considered male. Engineering is one such field. In 1960, women constituted about 18% of the total of engineering students, a figure much higher than in many Western countries, but much lower than in the USSR. Women also represent a high percentage of the medical students.[23]

Women and Men Valued for Their Contributions: We have written at some length about the importance of education for Chinese people in modern China, because of the impact of education in all aspects of both women's and men's lives. In schools, children of both sexes learn to work together, to cooperate, to help each other and to value the work of every individual as a contribution to the community and society as a whole. Young people carry these attitudes with them into adult life, where they are able to deal with each other on an equal footing. The schools and other institutions of formal and non-formal education provide the basis for Chinese women's equality with men. Thus, people are valued for what they are and for what they contribute to society rather than for the class and gender attributes that colored the relationships in feudal China. In China, students are no longer taught that women are inferior to men, that they have to be weak and obedient, or that their role is restricted to caring for the family and children. In school, they learn that women are equal citizens, productive workers, political organizers, and Communist activists. They have to be active and involved in a manner unprecedented in China or in many other nations around the world.

> *COMPARISON: The school is an important socialization agency in all societies. The kind of education provided in the schools has a major impact on the formation of attitudes among students--attitudes that they carry on into adult life. Research done in the U.S. has shown that sexist and racist attitudes are acquired during the early years of children's education. Materials used in American schools have been criticized as promoting or perpetuating sexist values and attitudes, and attempts are being made at various levels to eliminate sexism and racism from textbooks and other school curricula as well as among teachers, counselors, and administrators.*
>
> *STUDENT ACTIVITY: Can the students think of one sexist or racist attitude they might have encountered in school when they were young?*
>
> *Is there some attitude or activity in their school that they could label as sexist or racist? Can they develop any constructive strategies to counter this attitude or activity?*

Years of Transition

Progress Toward Freedom in Marriage: A major concern for some Chinese women and men has been the strong hold the Confucian ideal had over their freedom to choose a marriage partner and to relate to this partner as an equal. The "family revolution" early in the 20th century resulted in the passage of legislation for egalitarian marriage and divorce laws. But despite these new laws, arranged marriages were still the rule throughout China. Female infanticide and the sale of girls and women continued well into the republican period. In 1948, a Chinese woman interviewed by Jan Myrdal stated:

> When I was twenty-two I was sold. (Weeps) He came one day and fetched me and my daughter and took us to a slave dealer called Yang. (Weeps) My husband sold us so as to get money for opium. I never saw him after that. Some years ago I was told that he was dead. When I had been two days with Yang, the slave dealer, he sold me. He sold me and my daughter for 220 silver dollars to a farmer called He Nung-kung.
>
> I was very unhappy. Mr. He was an old man. He was twenty-three years older than I was. We did not love each other. But he was kind. I wasn't ill-treated there, neither by him nor by his family. Actually, he was a nice old man. (Weeps) He had his own household and did not live with his family. I bore him a son, so everyone was kind to me.[24]

The problem was that the Republican government did not enforce the new marriage laws. Any changes that occurred before the Communists came to power mostly affected women in urban areas and coastal regions.

> *TEACHER'S NOTE: Legal reform is sometimes essential to bringing about social change, but it does not guarantee that the legislated changes will occur. Often, a concerted effort is necessary to bring the reality closer to the legislated reforms. For instance, the abolition of black slavery in the U.S. did not automatically result from legal action. Instead, a lengthy struggle had to follow the legal reforms. Usually, it takes time to get people to comply, both in word and in action, with the requirements of a new law.*

Years of Revolution

Women Are Partners in Marriage: With Mao in power, Mao's phrase, "Women hold up half of heaven," had a chance to be realized. One of the first major acts of the new government was the Marriage Law of 1950. This marriage reform instituted by the Communists was considered a major instrument for socialist transformation. The Communists were determined to enforce the law throughout China, especially in the countryside. They turned family reform into a mass movement, involving most of the female population of China.

The Marriage Law abolished arranged marriages; outlawed the payment of any price in money or goods for a wife; banned polygamy, concubines and child marriage; allowed widows to remarry and guaranteed the right of divorce to the wife as well as to the husband.[25] In the rash of divorces that followed, over 16% were instituted by women. In the countryside, it came to be known as the "Divorce Law." The minimum age for marriage was raised two years to 18 for women and 20 for men.[26]

Specifically, the Marriage Law gives husband and wife equal status in the family, and does not recognize a "head of family." Article 7 states: "husband and wife are companions living together and enjoying equal status in the home."

The law is more partial to women than Western laws are. Hence, women may not only keep their maiden name (Article 11) but children also have the right to take their mother's name.

The marriage law takes into consideration the work of keeping a house. This work is considered a social occupation that is at the same level as others. Attempts are being made to lighten this burden by encouraging men to participate in housework.

The Marriage Law was seen by many as a liberation of both men and women from the burden of old reactionary ideas. There was a deliberate effort, first using education and persuasion, to bring men and women to accept the desired change in the roles they played in marriage. A man who beat his wife, for instance, would be criticized for his Confucian way of thinking rather than for being cruel, and would be persuaded to change his behavior. Joan Hinton tells of "one case of a man who habitually beat his wife and refused to change. He was denounced at a mass meeting, arrested, and sent to labor camp for re-education.[27] If re-education did not work, force was used.

Men Oppose Women's New Position in Marriage: Because it shook the status quo and granted considerable personal freedom and power to women, the Marriage Law was resisted in many areas and violence was reportedly perpetrated upon those implementing the law as well as those upon whom it was implemented. There were cases where female activists who were sent to villages to introduce the new law were murdered by peasant men. Some women were killed by their fathers for defying traditional customs.[28]

There were some male cadres who were not trained in the Marxist concept of the liberation of women. These cadres used their new authority to oppose women's progressive demands. Some cadres, afraid of losing power over their own wives, did not support the freedom of divorce provision and even actively resisted demands for divorce. On the other hand, there were also reports of zealously "enthusiastic cadres dissolving arranged marriages, returning child brides, forcing concubines to divorce their husbands and widows to remarry, and inflicting cruel punishment on the culprits."[20]

> *DISCUSSION: In some areas women, too, opposed the new law. Can students see why some women might be reluctant to give up the old ways? (Matchmakers, powerful mother-in-laws, women whose personality makes them fearful of change)*
>
> *Change in family patterns brings anxiety to people. In America some people accuse the Women's Movement of "breaking up the family." What fears do some people in America have about changing family patterns?*
>
> *In the students' own experience and observation, is the American family changing?*

Women's New Role Within the Family: The power granted women within the family was not only personal but became political as well. Indeed, in modern China it is very difficult to separate the political arena from other aspects of life. This is a basic difference in Chinese women's lives, as compared to their counterparts in other parts of the world, and especially in Western countries.

Everything in China has been politicized. This is clearly revealed in the following statement about the relationship between husband and wife, taken from an article in the People's Daily (October 14, 1964):

> In a socialist society, love between husband and wife is built on the identity of political beliefs and on the foundation of struggling together for the revolutionary cause. The relationship between husband and wife is first of all comradely...and the feelings between husband and wife are primarily revolutionary sentiments. For this reason, a husband should take the attitude of a revolutionary comrade toward his wife. This is reflected in the attitude of regarding one's wife as a revolutionary comrade-in-arms in the common struggle in the political sphere, as a class sister with whom one labours together in production or work, and as a companion with whom one lives together at home, respecting and loving each other, helping each other, and encouraging each other in making progress together. This is the Communist standard, morally and ideologically speaking, by which a revolutionary deals with the question of love, marriage and family.[30]

Changes Resulting from the Marriage Law: Despite these efforts, however, the reality of marriage may have been and may be still somewhat different for Chinese women. It is difficult to assess how much comradeship between husband and wife exists in a Chinese marriage. Certainly the wife is considered more or less equal to her husband. Of great significance is the fact that the authority of the mother-in-law has diminished. One does not hear of wife beating or other forms of abuse that were prevalent in feudal China. The majority of able Chinese women has gone out to do productive work in the fields and factories. There is a growing trend towards the nuclear rather than the extended family. Many wives participate in political activities especially at the local level. Yet, personal expression is curtailed in China and we do not know much about the personal lives of Chinese women.

Traditional Practices Persist: Although the Marriage Law granted young people the right to free choice of a marriage partner, complete freedom of choice of marriage partners is not yet the norm in actuality. The transition from arranged marriages to free-choice marriages was difficult, "because opportunities for meeting and courting the other sex are somewhat limited."[31] Martin King Whyte attributes this to the absence of a "dating culture" in China, due to persistence of traditional values and revolutionary ideals which do not encourage the emergence of such a culture. In contrast to American society, where the dating culture flourishes in the schools, strong official pressure in China discourages the youth from getting romantically involved. Whyte thus concludes:

> In this situation, with free marriage choice urged, but with limited opportunities for getting to know potential spouses, modified forms of marriage arrangements arise. Marriage arrangers continue to exist, either in the form of local figures who customarily provide introductions, or simply in the form of parents, relatives, and friends. In some locations, officials have recognized the need to provide youth with help in finding mates and, in an effort to take business away from traditional marriage arrangers and matchmakers, have arranged cadres of the local production unit, the Women's Association, and the Communist Youth League to arrange introduction to youth in other units. Political authorities can also play negative roles in marriage decisions. Party and Youth League members are expected to report their developing romantic interests to these organizations. If they want to marry someone from the former wealthy classes or someone with a questionable personal history, they will be strongly discouraged, although not absolutely forbidden, from doing so.[32]

Although women and men generally do not marry until their mid or late twenties, it is reported that sexual relationships before marriage are not common. It is also reported that China has succeeded in wiping out prostitution and venereal disease, and that homosexuality is absent. Western observers characterize Chinese morality as puritanical. But morality may be better understood within the framework of the socialist revolution in China and the role of the individual within the revolution. The common good is emphasized over personal needs and serving the country is seen as service to oneself.

The Chinese outlook on divorce is also less lenient than in the West. Although women now have the right to end an unhappy marriage by divorce, and a divorcee or a widow may remarry, the government became alarmed at the rising divorce rate and the continuing cases of suicide due to marital difficulties. By the mid-fifties, after a high wave of divorces, the government discouraged divorce through active dissuasion. Registration officials, mediation committees and local courts pressed for reconciliation to prevent rash divorces and generally allowed divorce only as a final resort.[33] In 1956, official policy placed great emphasis on "family harmony." The family was emphasized as a stabilizing influence, which resulted in a national reluctance to accept divorce as a solution to marital difficulties.

Motherhood Is Planned: In the mid-fifties, the government embarked on a massive program of population control. On December 27, 1954 they ordered birth control education to be instituted. A conference on the subject produced the comment that "handling children is more important than handling tractors or pumps."[34] In March of 1957, the Minister of Health, Madam Li Teh-Chuan, launched a campaign urging women to practice birth control as a means of ridding the country of poverty. Chou En Lai stated in 1957: "Education on planned parenthood was and continues to be carried on in China mainly to protect the health of mothers and provide favorable conditions for bringing up children..."[35] Women were more receptive than men to the idea of birth control. To women, this control over their own bodies gave them a chance to participate in building their country. In feudal China, women gained respect and limited power by having sons; in post-revolutionary China, women gained power by involvement in productive work in the educational, economic and political spheres. Women's options were thus widened and their world expanded considerably.

> *COMPARISON: Birth control has made it possible for women around the world, including the U.S., to have a small family, thus freeing women for more active participation in various activities outside the home. Since premarital sex is discouraged in China, birth control does not seem to be of concern to unmarried women. This seems to be the case in countries with a strong tradition of emphasis on female chastity, such as Islamic countries. Compare the differences in a woman's role as a mother in Africa and China.*

The Special Needs of Working Mothers Are Considered: In order to encourage and facilitate women's contribution to the economy without disrupting the family, housewife workshops were created in the neighborhoods. There, the housewife spends eight hours a day working, while at the same time she is able to watch her children and prepare their meals. These women do work that is not specialized and that can be done with little training. They manufacture parts, such as coils for electric batteries. When women need special training for their work, a specialist is sent from neighboring factories to train women for the task.[36] Many large factories and communes, too, provide child care and mothers may take time from their work to nurse their children.

It is clear from the above that the Chinese government is whole-heartedly committed to providing all the support services and special facilities needed to facilitate women's work outside the home. Women with young children thus are not left out of the important task of transforming China from an impoverished country to a major world power.

These changes have created greater independence and mobility for all family members. A man or a woman may be separated from his or her family temporarily (for example, to work for the party, attend meetings, etc.) without any guilt feelings about neglecting family and children. A group of Chinese-American women, during a visit to China, asked their guide how she felt about being separated from her family for several days. She answered:

> "Oh, I don't mind, I find my job very exciting, and I don't have to worry about home while I am away. My husband looks after the older children and the youngest stays at the nursery overnight. The neighbors will help in case difficulties arise. I go where I am needed, and I don't feel any hardships..."[37]

COMPARISON: Mobility remains a major problem for women with young children in the U.S. and other parts of the world. However, American women also have acquired mobility in recent years. The commuting marriage is a new phenomenon unheard of before in American history.

DISCUSSION:

There is a strong ethic in America which states that women should not work outside their homes; that within the institution of marriage and motherhood a woman's main job is to tend to the needs of her husband and children. Can students comment on this and relate it to the attitude of the Chinese toward women's role within the family?

What kinds of changes would need to happen in this country if we truly believed that women should work outside the home?

Women Still Primarily Responsible for the Family: Despite the changes in marriage and family life in Communist China, the majority of women still were occupied with household work and family responsibilities. Domestic management was glorified and the supportive role women were supposed to play in their relationships with male members of the family was emphasized. Combining home responsibilities and economic activities was a woman's task. In 1958, a new code of feminine virtues ("Five Virtues") was expounded in official publications:

> Good at harmonizing family and neighbor relationships, good at managing the household, good at educating the children, good at encouraging the family members to work and study, and good at one's own ideological studies.[38]

In spite of the major gains that Chinese women had made, they were still hampered by traditional attitudes that place primary responsibility for the family on the woman.

After the cultural revolution of 1966, the government attempted to assist women in finding a solution to this universal problem of convincing husbands to share household work in order to free women for other work. The Chinese government launched a campaign whose thrust was that women should be absolved of the sole responsibility for cooking and cleaning, washing and taking care of the children. The leading Chinese journal Red Flag, for instance, recently advocated that "men and women should share household chores if women are to be politically equal."[39]

Even so, recent visitors to China have observed that traditional division of labor within the family still exists. Although men help in household chores, women still shoulder the major responsibility for house and children. For instance, a group of American students and teachers who visited China in 1971 noted:

> Everywhere we went we asked whether men share in the duties of the home. Occasionally we were assured that men pitch in and do a little something around the house. The women in one household at the Hong-giao Commune proudly told us that all the men in the home know how to cook and do cook sometimes. But almost everywhere when we asked who washes the clothes by hand, who takes care of the children after they come home from school, who buys the food, who cooks the meals, who cleans the house, who does the sewing, the answer was "The wife, of course."[40]

COMPARISON: Household work has traditionally been considered woman's work. This is still true in most countries including the U.S. However, although household technology has improved in the U.S. over the past fifty years, research has indicated that American women still spend on household tasks as much time as was spent by their mothers who did not have access to such technology.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: List the changes in the position of women within marriage and within the family in China. Then, the continuities of traditional marriage and family.

New Ideals of Beauty

In the years of transition, women were introduced to new standards of "feminine" beauty. In the districts that were under the Nationalist rule of Chiang Kai-shek, this was an era of great Western influences. The impact of American missionaries, Western movies and their Chinese counterpart and dancing cabarets increased all over China in 1928. From the West also came "...the permanent wave, English high-heeled shoes, Parisian perfumes, the American silk stockings, the new high-slit flowering gowns, the brassiere...and the one-piece female bathing suit."[41]

At the same time, the simple uncomplicated look of the peasant was gaining stature among the revolutionaries. An anti-foot-binding movement got underway and the women's associations in the southern and central part of China sent emissaries from door to door to agitate against foot-binding and long hair. Every woman under thirty was urged to unbind her feet and free her movements. These emissaries used persuasion and sometimes force. It is reported that when fearful conservative women refused to unbind their feet and cut their hair, the more revolutionary women "took the law into their own hands, cut their hair and unbound their feet by force."[42]

In China today people are valued because of their contribution to China's progress. Personal success has assumed a secondary value, and so has personal appearance. Women have become less concerned about the way they look than they are about what they do and how well they do it. They gain more satisfaction from their contribution to the revolution than from personal possessions and physical appearance. Women are often pictured wearing baggy pants and work uniforms and most Chinese dress in somber colors. The story of Wei Feng-ying, a worker engineer and Chinese heroine, reveals the changes in women because of the revolution of 1949.

> One day she wore a white blouse to work because her roommates have called her factory dress unbecoming. Her foreman criticized: White blouse today, fancy dress and hair oil tomorrow.[43]

She studied Mao's teachings and changed her ways. Her main objective was to serve the people. She gained a sense of inner beauty.

To the male observer, judging by Western standards of beauty or by traditional Chinese standards, Chinese women may look "unfeminine." However, they have gained a new kind of beauty. This was expressed in the words of a Chinese-American woman, as follows:

> We think Chinese women are truly beautiful. Their radiance comes from good health, self-confidence, and pride in their collective accomplishments. We found women to be very much like those idealized in China Pictorial: they really are rosy-cheeked, determined, and quick to smile.[44]

Visitors to China are always impressed, too, with the walk and bearing of the new women of China. It is a purposeful stride, full of self-pride and self-confidence.

DISCUSSION:

Ask students to imagine how women whose feet were bound walked. The young women in the class might think about whether the shoes they wear make a difference in how they walk.

Ask students to notice how the shoes we wear reflect what we want to do that day.

Discuss changes students may know about in the style of clothes and makeup of American women within the last 15 years. What influenced these changes?

TEACHER'S NOTE: Refer to any pictures you might have of modern Chinese women today.

ECONOMIC POWER

Focus Questions:

In the reading excerpts or in the overview information, look at the effect of continuities and changes on women's power

- *to support themselves;*
- *to work in whatever occupation they want;*
- *to earn a good wage in whatever work they do;*
- *to have a say in how the goods they produce or money they earn is used;*
- *to have their work valued;*
- *to expand their opportunities to work.*

Identify:

- *spheres where the amount and content of women's economic power have not changed;*
- *spheres where women have more economic power than previously.*

The extensive participation of women in the labor force of modern China has done more to upgrade their status than any other change.

Before the Communist victory, the complete economic dependence of women upon men was a major factor in their subordination and in the limitations on their freedom and power.

The idea that a woman is oppressed because she is cut off from productive work is central to Communist thought. Engels wrote: "To emancipate woman and make her the equal of man is and remains impossible so long as woman is shut out from social productive labor and restricted to domestic labor."[45]

Years of Transition

There were some beneficial changes in the economic power of women in the period before the Communist Revolution. In 1931 the Family Law gave women the right to ownership of property and inheritance. But this affected only women from wealthy families and was not enforced. There were other changes that had an impact on many women. For instance, the development of industries in the coastal cities, as well as in industrial centers inland provided some opportunities for women to participate on a limited scale in these industries, especially in textiles. This led to some degree of economic independence for women as they became wage earners. Although most of these women did not receive adequate pay, this was a major step toward their liberation and active participation in the economic and political system of China.

> *COMPARISON: The textile industry has traditionally absorbed women workers in Western countries as well as many Third World countries. Textile and garment industries relied heavily on women in the United States. Chinese women immigrants to America also participated heavily in these industries which underpaid and exploited them.*

Writing of the impact of industrialization on women's lives, Agnes Smedley described a visit to a silk manufacturing town in 1930.

> Only as we neared big market towns, in which silk filatures belched forth the stench of cocoons, did we come upon better homes and fewer careworn faces. The daughters of such families were spinners. It was then that I began to see what industrialism, bad as it had seemed elsewhere, meant to the working girls. These were the only places in the whole country where the birth of a baby girl was an occasion for joy, for here girls were the main support of their families. Consciousness of their worth was reflected in their dignified independent bearing...They could not but compare with the low position of married women. Their independence seemed a personal affront to officialdom.[46]

With the increase in access to education came an increase in occupational opportunities for women in the cities. Women were employed in large numbers as teachers in the various girls' schools established throughout the country. Women were also called upon to help in the difficult task of organizing workers into labor unions.

> *COMPARISON: Urbanization usually creates new job possibilities for women. China's urban areas did not grow as fast as other developing nations, for example, Africa.*

These changes, however, affected only a small segment of Chinese women. Work opportunities were extremely limited and most women continued to be dependent on men for economic support. Furthermore, the majority of the Chinese population, whether male or female, continued to suffer from poverty, disease, starvation and exploitation.

Although some women gained a new degree of economic power through participation in traditional industries (e.g., textiles) or agricultural work, the majority of women remained without economic power. It was mainly lack of opportunity that deprived them of gainful employment. But continued traditional attitudes also restricted many women to homemaking and to related activities within the home and condemned others to poverty.

Years of Revolution

End of the Economic Restrictions on Women: The reforms undertaken by the Communist government ended the economic restrictions on women. The Marriage Law of 1950, mentioned in the section on Personal Power, included these specific articles which affect economic control:

> Article 9: Both husband and wife have the right to free choice of occupations and free participation in work or in social activities.
>
> Article 10: Both husband and wife shall have equal rights in the possession and management of family property.
>
> Article 11: Both husband and wife shall have the right to inherit each other's property.[47]

Agrarian Reform Gives Women Power: One of the most far-reaching reforms was massive land redistribution, which not only ended the landlord system but also stopped male monopoly over land ownership.

New agrarian laws in 1952 stipulated that both men and women should receive equal shares of the land and directed that separate property deeds be issued to females when necessary. Household services were considered to be productive labor that contributed to the acquisition of family property.[48]

The collectivization of land mobilized women for full participation in collective farming on about the same level as men. Women received units for their work on collective farms although they worked fewer hours than the men because they had to combine home and work responsibilities.

Peasant women also got a chance to improve their skills and learn new ones. Training classes in agriculture for women were organized by the women's associations in various parts of China, and "the fame of those who mastered agricultural labor spread far and wide."[49] Hinton tells of a widow in Shen Settlement who startled everybody with her strength and skill: "She could do everything a man could do and more. She could even push a loaded wheelbarrow on the highway and earn $12 a day, Border Region currency, transporting bricks. She was so skilled in planting that in the spring all peasants in Shen Settlement wanted her, and no one else to plant their millet."[50]

> *COMPARISON: The experience of agrarian women in modern Africa is quite different. Notice that receiving land and training in farming technology went hand-in-hand in China. What happened in Africa?*

Women Are Trained for Industrial Jobs: Great emphasis was placed on the participation of women in a variety of productive work. The Communists instituted efficient and exciting job training programs, in which people of both sexes with little previous experience gained essential professional and technical skills. The number of female workers in the industrial sector increased from 2 million in 1952 to 8 million in 1958.[51] Over the past two decades, the number of women industrial workers has increased tremendously.

One factor that favored women's employment in agriculture and industry was the adoption of labor-intensive methods of production. China is a poor country that could not afford to mechanize. As a result, women were encouraged to work and fill the labor shortages that were created by expanding the scale of production in cooperatives and communes.

Nevertheless, although women do participate in heavy industrial work, only a limited number do so. Yet, it is significant that any women at all do heavy industrial work, especially in a country with over a thousand-year-old tradition of frail women with bound feet.

Judy McLean reported that in the heavy industrial units she visited, including docks, steel mills and oil refineries, she saw between 15 and 50 women workers. In Tiensten, she spoke to a woman who was the first female worker in a steel mill. The woman told her:

> The old workers did not want to accept me. They thought women couldn't do machinery work. These wrong ideas go away gradually. The factory took eight of us for testing. The women did the work well, the men comrades summed it up--women are very clever and grasp techniques quickly. Now there are 1,307 of us in the factory.[52]

Women were able to gain some economic power and prove themselves by hard work. They were able to dispel the old Confucian ideas that women cannot do certain kinds of work.

DISCUSSION:

Women in America who work in non-traditional jobs often have experienced teasing and on-the-job harassment.

Can students recall hearing or reading about women reporting such incidents?

Sometimes there is united resistance to women holding certain types of jobs. For example, there is currently considerable disagreement over whether or not women should be active fire-fighters or police officers. Are there jobs which students feel women are not physically able to do? That men are not physically able to do?

Men from cultures where people have slight builds also have trouble getting some jobs that require physical strength. How could we deal with this kind of discrimination?

During a visit to China in 1974, Ann Hartley saw Chinese women at work and reported the following:

> I saw women working side by side with men in construction, heavy and light industry, in education, agriculture and leadership roles--in fact, everywhere. The liberation of women has been a national goal and the government has actually promoted projects and policies that meet the needs of women. From all appearances it is true: women do hold up half the sky, as Mao Tse-tung has said. In an effort to be fair to women, consideration is given to their personal needs without penalizing them for weakness or inferiority.[53]

Such measures include relieving women from heavy work during pregnancy, and giving maternity leave (in factories, women are given 56 days paid maternity leave, and after the birth of a child, a mother receives an extra hour of each day to breast-feed her baby).

Many factories supply nurseries for infants so that mothers can be near their newborn children after they return to work. Many factories have child-care facilities, as do schools and neighborhood communes. Child-care centers are generally available at a modest cost. Most of the child-care facilities provide day care only, although some are residential and allow a child to stay all week and to go home over the weekend.[54]

Women Are Helped by the Communes: Women achieved full participation in economic activity and were relieved from home tasks with the establishment of People's Communes in 1958. At that time a full-scale attempt to mobilize women for economic activities began. Of the impact of the communes, Aline Wong says:

> The communes were heralded as a new form of social organization in which complete equality of the sexes and total emancipation of women could be achieved. Large numbers of nurseries, kindergartens, communal dining halls, laundry service units, etc., were established in order to free the women from housework, thus enabling them to join in the production campaigns.[55]

By 1959, government figures showed that about 90 percent of all working women worked in the rural communes. The number of hours women spent working rose considerably, although it was still less than the number of hours spent by men in the communes.

Urban communes were also established during the era of the Great Leap Forward in the late fifties, but their development was halted by 1960, and a return to decentralized production was reinstituted. Because of worsening economic conditions in China and the failure of the Great Leap Forward, many women lost their chance at productive employment and had to resume their family responsibilities.

COMPARISON: In the United States, women and minority men were among the first to suffer unemployment because of worsening economic conditions in the seventies. They were the last hired and first fired. This is because women's work is considered to be auxiliary. It is also an indication of the generally fragile economic power of women in most societies especially at times of economic setbacks.

Most Women Work Outside the Home: As a result of official policy that encourages women's active participation in the economy, it is estimated that almost 100 percent of able women, aged 45 and under, are engaged in productive work outside the home. There are also efforts to involve older women in a variety of community activities, including study meetings, taking care of grandchildren, visiting schools and talking to the students about the hardships of "the bitter past." Older women are also engaged in social work and other community services.

While there is a great emphasis on physical endurance, there has also been a campaign to encourage intellectual efforts. Housewives, for instance, assemble electronic appliances, young peasant women become "barefoot doctors," and women students do advanced research in chemistry and biology. All women devote one hour twice a week to the study of Marxism.

Little Choice of Occupation: Women and men do not have much personal choice in selecting the kind of work they want. Economic necessity and national needs assume priority over personal needs, and women, as well as men, are taught that they serve their needs by serving the needs of society.

DISCUSSION:

Students might question the concept of choice of work in this country. Given economic, educational, sexual and racial barriers plus the limited number of available jobs, do most Americans have a choice of job opportunities?

However, regardless of limitations in the choice of an occupation, economic participation has given women considerable financial and personal power. It has freed them from their traditional dependence on men. Since they contribute to family income, they also share in the decision-making in the family, and their husbands share in household chores, as we saw earlier. Thus, the traditional division of labor inside and outside the family is modified, although not changed totally. The saying that "everything a man can do, a woman can do," gave rise to a new motto: "Everything a woman can do, a man can do."

Traditional Values Cause Some Discrimination: Despite the gains in the economic sphere, Chinese women are still discriminated against when it comes to pay and holding important jobs. Equal pay for equal work is still an ideal rather than a reality for most Chinese women, especially in rural areas. But they are fighting to end this discrimination, as is indicated in the following excerpt from an article published in China Reconstructs under the title "How Our Village Got Equal Pay for Equal Work." It was written by the head of Hsiaochinchuang Brigade Women's Association.

> Our base rate is determined at meetings held once a year. Each brigade member says what he thinks his work is worth and the others discuss it. At a meeting not long ago, while two-thirds of the men confidently stated 10 points, only one strong woman had the courage to bid even 9 1/2. None of the other strong women dared bid over eight. This was when the brigade Communist Party branch asked that the evaluation be stopped and organized a series of meetings to criticize male supremacy.
>
> When we began the evaluation, some men said, "All a man has to do is stick out his fist and he does as much as a woman does in six months. If women want the same base rate, they have to do just as we do in plowing, planting, digging ditches and carrying sacks of grain." We pointed out that women had never had the chance to learn some of these jobs. If you only make the strength and skill the basis of your comparison you'll be pitting men's strong points, physiologically and historically, against women's weak points. First and foremost, the comparison should be on attitude toward the collective, on patriotic and collectivist thinking and contribution to the collective...
>
> This kind of evaluation made a dent in the thinking of many of the men. Some of the men team leaders pointed out that in many ways the women showed greater concern for the collective than the men...
>
> After comparison on these various aspects, two-thirds of the men still got 10 points. Out of 136 women, 16 got 10 points and 40 others got 9 or over. A total of 116 women got a higher rating than before.[56]

This continued discrimination against working women reflects continued role definitions and attitudes towards women. Norma Diamond attributes this to the persistence of traditional values with regard to women.

> There remains the need to look at the problem in terms of ideology and the retention of traditional ways of thinking about women. The long legacy of second class status is not that easily obliterated. In many areas, women are excused or even barred from doing agricultural work during menses. The reason given is that it would be detrimental to their health, but the underlying reason is that in traditional thinking, menstruating women were polluting and would affect the crops. This kind of thinking is still being struggled against.[57]

A group of feminists who visited China discussed the fact that sexual division of labor outside the home still exists. As they reported:

> The women we talked to did not regard it as a problem that certain areas of work were seen as better suited to women. In one discussion our (male) interpreters said that women are not as strong as men and as China is still poor and underdeveloped men's greater strength must still be exploited. However, we pointed out to them that they were men and that their job was not physically arduous in the sense they had meant. Also we saw many women doing hard work and seemingly handling it very well. About men working in creches they said: "But looking after the babies is a very important job and women do it so well. We couldn't do it so well." We argued about this a great deal and no one we talked with rejected our contentions outright. Many of the creches we saw were staffed by women from that particular factory who were chosen by their mainly female comrades for that work because of their general high political and work level. Certainly the women working in creches did not suffer economic hardships as a result. Workers in creches are paid at least as well as average factory wages.[58]

In spite of this disparity, it is clear that the absolute economic dependence of women upon men that prevailed in feudal China and continued during the republican period ended as women started to become wage earners and active economic participants. Economic involvement for women became a necessity, and they participated in those tasks that required their services or for which they were suited by education and training. Since their work has equal value to the work men do, women have an economic power that was unavailable to them in traditional China.

Notes

[1] Han Suyin, *Destination Chungking* (Great Britain: Panther Books, Ltd., 1973, first published 1942), pp. 245-248.

[2] Charlotte Cohen, "Experiment in Freedom: Women in China," in Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is powerful* (New York: Vintage, 1970), p. 392.

[3] Agnes Smedley, *Portraits of Chinese women in revolution* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1976), pp. 13-15.

[4] Jack Belden, *China shakes the world* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970, first published 1949), pp. 217-219.

[5] Chou Keh-Chou, "How Our Village Got Equal Pay for Equal Work," *China Reconstructs* (March 1975).

[6] Smedley, "The Dedicated," *op*. *cit*., pp. 4-26.

[7] Carol Tavris, "The Speak Bitterness Revolution," *Psychology Today*, May 1974, p. 43.

[8] William Hinton, *Fanshen: A documentary of revolution in a Chinese village* (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 157.

[9] *Ibid*.

[10] Hinton, *Op*. *cit*., p. 158.

[11] Judith Gingold, "One of These Days, Pow Right in the Kisser : The Truth About Battered Wives." *Ms*. (August 1976), p. 54.

[12] Aline Wong, "Women in China, Past and Present," in Matthiason, ed., *Many sisters: women in cross cultural perspective* (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. 243.

[13] Quoted in Helen Snow, *Women in modern China* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1961), p. 80.

[14] Wong, *op*. *cit*., p. 243.

[15] Julia Kristeva, About Chinese women, Anita Barrows, trans. (New York: Urizen Books, 1977).

[16] Cohen, Op. cit., p. 414.

[17] André Malraux, Anti-Memoirs (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 465.

[18] Han Suyin, Op. cit., p. 25.

[19] Phyllis Andors, "Politics of Chinese Development: The Case of Women, 1960-1966," Signs, Journal of Women in Culture and Society 2:1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 116.

[20] Ruth Sidel, Women and childcare in China (New York: Penguin Books, 1976).

[21] Quoted in Ibid., p. 109.

[22] Wong, Op. cit., p. 246.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Jan Myrdal, Report from a Chinese village (New York: Vintage, 1972), p. 204.

[25] The Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1973).

[26] Wong, Op. cit., pp. 242-243.

[27] Joan Hinton, "Politics and Marriage: Women Gain Equal Pay and Men Share Housework at Red Star Commune," New China 2:1 (June 1976), p. 32.

[28] Wong, Op. cit., pp. 242-243.

[29] Katie Curtin, Women in China (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), p. 37.

[30] Elizabeth Croll, The women's movement in China: a selection of readings, Modern China Series, No. 6 (Anglo Chinese Educational Institute, 1974), p. 36.

[31] Martin Whyte, "The Family," Academy of Political Science Proceedings 31 (March 1973), p. 178.

[32] Ibid., pp. 178-179.

[33] Whyte, Op. cit., p. 180.

[34] Gerald Clark, Impatient giant (New York: McKay, 1959), p. 103.

[35] Snow, Op. cit., p. 6.

[36] Delia Davin, Woman-work: women and the party in revolutionary China (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 186.

[37] Yvonne Nishio, "Women in China," in Chan and Chan, eds., Going Back (Los Angeles: University of California, Asian American Studies Center, 1973), p. 87.

[38] Wong, Op. cit., p. 244.

[39] Joan Hinton, "Politics and Marriage: Women Gain Equal Pay and Men Share Housework at Red Star Commune," New China 2:1 (June 1976), pp. 32-34.

[40] Lawrence Hong, "The Role of Women in the People's Republic of China: Legacy and Change," Social Problems 23:5 (June 1976), pp. 545-557.

[41] Quoted in Wong, Op. cit., p. 241.

[42] Smedley, Op. cit., p. 35.

[43] Cohen, Op. cit., p. 414.

[44] Nishio, Op. cit., p. 88.

[45] Delia Davin, "Women in the Countryside of China." Paper prepared for the Conference on Women in Chinese Society, San Francisco, n.d., Mimeographed, p. 4.

[46] Smedley, Op. cit., pp. 106-107.

[47] The Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1973), p. 3.

[48] Ch'in-K'un Yang, Chinese Communist society: the family and the village (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1965), p. 143.

[49] Hinton, Op. cit., p. 160.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Judy McLean, "Women in China," Edcentric 31-32 (November 1974), pp. 8-11.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ann Hartly, "Women Hold Up Half the Sky," Convergence 7:3 (1974), pp. 18-31.

[54] Sidel, Op. cit.

[55] Wong, Op. cit., p. 245.

[56] Chou Keh-Chou, Op. cit., pp. 8-9.

[57] Norma Diamond, "Status of Women in Rural China," in Reiter, ed., Toward an anthropology of women (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 372-395.

[58] Sue O'Sullivan, The moon for dinner: changing relations... women in China (London: Sue O'Sullivan, 1975), p. 39.

Student Learning Materials

Continuity and Change: Years of Transition

Belden, Jack. China shakes the world. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970. 524 pp. Paper. $4.95.

- "Gold Flower's story (pp. 275-307).

  In pp. 288-307, Gold Flower is rescued by the 8th Route Army, which comes to her village and organizes a Women's Association. She joins the Association, speaks about her mistreatment by her father-in-law, and gains the support of the Association to retaliate against him. When her husband returns after a long absence, the same process occurs. This selection reveals the power of the speak bitterness movement and the Women's Association. It is easy reading, and students like it very much.

  If you are using the pamphlet version of Gold Flower, reading is pp. 14-33.

  If you are using the book, another possible transition selection is "Guerilla girl" (pp. 216-219).

Han Suyin. Destination Chungking. St. Albans, Eng.: Panther Books, 1973. 252 pp. Paper. $2.50.

An autobiography of an upper middle class Chinese woman. Educated in American missionary schools as well as in England, the author shows a strong Western orientation mingled with a deep love for China and its people. She served her country as a medical doctor and later as the wife of the Chinese ambassador to England. She is an example of a woman who achieved success without confrontation with the traditional culture.

- "Coming of age in China" (pp. 239-252).

  The last chapter of the book describes conditions during the war with Japan, and the reactions of intellectuals to them. A conversation in Han Suyin's home shows the ideological conflict between communists and nationalists, and between new and old ideas of women's role.

Hsieh Pingying. Girl rebel: the autobiography of Hsieh Pingying with extracts from her new "New war diaries." New York: DaCapo, 1975. 270 pp. Hardcover. $18.00.

The story of a woman's struggle to free herself from the repression of a traditional family, principally relating to the 1920's.

Katz, Naomi and Milton, Nancy, eds. Fragment from a lost diary and other stories: women of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973. 318 pp. Paper. $3.95.

Anthology of third world literature about women: 20 stories by men as well as women. Introduction briefly comments on each and its place in the book's three sections. "The women of the earlier part of the collection are to a large degree helpless victims of a social order and family structure which offer no possibility of a way out. For the women of the later stories, there are alternatives, but they are alternatives which bring with them new choices containing their own conflicts. So while this anthology opens with a presentation of some of the most painful problems facing women, it closes with some of the most difficult questions." (Introduction, xviii.)

- Shih Ming. "Fragment from a lost diary" (pp. 211-225). A young women finds that a traditional problem, pregnancy, hinders and even endangers revolutionary work. The story discusses a difficult choice, whether to keep or abort the fetus.

Myrdal, Jan. Report from a Chinese village. New York: Vintage Books, 1972. 374 pp. Paper. $2.95.

In a rather lengthy introduction, Myrdal explains his reasons for doing this book of interviews with people in a northern Chinese village in 1962, as well as his methods, biases and cautions about the personal accounts. This material is relevant to our concern with oral history. After a description of the village, the villagers speak for themselves. Part IV (pp. 203-242) deals with women. This book is considered a valuable reading for the transitional period in China, for teachers as well as students. It also is informative about traditional China.

- "Ma Hung-tsai's wife, aged 25" (pp. 212-213). This young housewife works hard in the fields and at home. Her husband sometimes helps with household chores and child care, and she feels she has a say in what to grow on their plot of land. Shows changing power of young wives.
- "Ching Chi and lao dung: how physical work taught her the proletarian attitude to life, aged 29" (pp. 321-328). A physician's daughter tells of changes in her attitudes and life style after a year's physical labor on a commune. These are summarized on p. 327. The selection illustrates changes in women's power and the influences behind these changes.

Pa Chin. The family. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1972. 329 pp. Paper. $2.95.

One of the most popular Chinese novels of the 1930's, and an example of the kind of literature that aroused young intellectuals to fight against feudalism and imperialism. In telling the story of the Kao family compound, it reveals the conflict between generations and classes and the struggle for women's liberation. The introduction by Olga Lang provides good background material on China during the first half of the 20th century.

- Chapter V (pp. 30-35).
  A dialogue between a 40-year-old mother and her teenage daughter reflects the changing attitudes of women and the influences behind them.

Seybolt, Peter, ed. Through Chinese eyes. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974. 158 pp. Hardcover. $7.50. Paper edition, v.1, $2.75; v.2, $2.75.

An "extremely well done collection of readings illustrating the cultural values of the new China...from the perspective of...peasants, women, children and workers.... A sympathetic and representative portrayal...." (Posner and de Keijzer, 2nd edition, pp. 68-69.) See relevant sections concerning women, including the one below. Our pagination is from the hardcover edition.

- "Meng Hsiang-ying stands up" (pp. 72-78).
  A short story about a young woman who was mistreated by her husband and her mother-in-law. When the communists came to the village, Meng joined the Women's Association, thus gaining power and emancipation. Her involvement in agricultural work helped her further, as she became known as a hard worker and an organizer.

Snow, Helen. The Chinese communists: sketches and autobiographies of the guard; book I, Red dust; book II, Autobiographical profiles and biographical sketches. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972. 398 pp. Hardcover. $15.00.

An enlarged edition of Red dust, originally published in 1952. Some of the original material which was then left out appears now in book II. Snow gathered this material in Yenan in the 1930's. See Part Seven: Women as well as the three selections annotated below. The book as a whole gives a unique picture of a unique time and place in history.

- "Liu Chien-hsien, wife of Po Ku" (pp. 229-249).
  The wife of the head of foreign affairs in Yenan, a woman of great personal, economic and political power in her own right, tells of her struggles and achievements. She talks about her childhood and education, her escape from an arranged marriage, her factory work and her joining the communists. On the Long March, she was captain of the Women's Detachment. At age 29, she was director of mines and factories, a seasoned participant in economic and women's struggles.
- "Lily Wu, who caused Mao Tse-tung's divorce" (pp. 250-261).
  This Westernized woman, a famous actress, talks about her family, her Christian education, her marriage, career and political involvement. She discusses love, marriage and service to her country. Note how these attitudes and activities reflect continuation and/or change from traditional China.

- "Miss Ting Ling's school days" (pp. 262-266). A brief autobiographical account by the famous journalist, especially of her education. She was one of four young women--another became Mao's first wife--to enter a previously all-male school. She tells of the male students' reactions, compares education in the sexually segregated schools and describes the influences on students' lives at that time.

Audiovisual

From war to revolution. 1970. British Broadcasting Corporation. Black and white. 20 minutes. $12.00 rental from Time-Life Films, 100 Eisenhower Drive, Paramus, N.J. 07652

The harsher realities are explicit in this film as they explode into the long struggle for control of China, itself a grim picture. Remarkable footage and good commentary. Our main complaint is that the role of women in this struggle does not receive special attention. Teachers will need to stress that. Magnitude of struggle, background for changes in women's position.

Student Learning Materials

Continuity and Change: Years of Revolution

Myrdal, Jan. Report from a Chinese village. New York: Vintage Books, 1972. 374 pp. Paper. $2.95.

In a rather lengthy introduction, Myrdal explains his reasons for doing this book of interviews with people in a northern Chinese village in 1962, as well as his methods, biases and cautions about the personal accounts. This material is relevant to our concern with oral history. After a description of the village, the villagers speak for themselves. Part IV (pp. 203-242) deals with women. This book is considered a valuable reading for the transitional period in China, for teachers as well as students. It also is informative about traditional China.

- "Li Kuei-ying, woman pioneer, aged 32" (pp. 216-228). A woman from the countryside talks about her education in the party school and her efforts to then teach other women. She also helped organize a Women's Association. The reading shows how education enabled this woman to gain personal, economic and political power and to assume a leadership role in her community as an agent of change.

New women in new China. Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972. 78 pp. Paper. $0.50 from China Books and Periodicals, West Coast Center, 2929 24th Street, San Francisco 94110; Midwest Center, 210 W. Madison Street, Chicago 60606; East Coast Center, 125 5th Avenue, New York 10003.

Short personal statements and articles. Includes: "New women in new China"; Lu Yu-lan, "A liberated woman speaks"; Pasang, "A slave before, I now help rule my country"; Lin Chiao-chih, "The party keeps me young"; Huang Hai, "The 'March 8th' fishing boats"; Hsin Kung-yuan, "Women fliers"; Hsin Hua, "Women oil extractors of Taching"; Kung Yeh, "Housewives can make electronic equipment"; Hung Nung, "Iron girls team of Tachai"; Hsin Ping, "Women work on live ultra-high-tension power lines"; and Lung Chiang, "Women bridge builders in forest areas." Eight pages of photographs.

All the readings are excellent manifestations of women's newly achieved power in personal, economic and political spheres.

The seeds and other stories. Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972. 193 pp. Paper. $1.00 from China Books and Periodicals, addresses above.

A collection of stories which focus on "life on the communes, the struggles to grow crops in mountainous and desert areas and to harness water power and of women's participation in these struggles." (China Books and Periodicals, 1976 catalog, p. 11.)

- Yin Yi-ping, "Half the population" (pp. 27-36). This short story tells of women's participation in heavy construction work, unloading concrete poles. It shows how their determination enabled them to respond creatively to the project director's sexism.

Seybolt, Peter, ed. Through Chinese eyes. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974. 158 pp. Hardcover. $7.50. Paper edition, v.1, $2.75; v.2, $2.75.

An "extremely well done collection of readings illustrating the cultural values of the new China...from the perspective of...peasants, women, children and workers... A sympathetic and representative portrayal...." (Posner and de Keijzer, 2nd edition, pp. 68-69.) See relevant sections concerning women, including the one below. Again, our pagination here is from the hardcover edition.

- "The home life of a saleswoman" (pp. 88-93). This first-person account is brief and easy to read. Seybolt's suggested questions at the beginning of this selection are worth pursuing.
- "Romance in new China" (pp. 115-122). This short story reveals how courtship is carried on in modern China and thus how young men and women choose marriage partners. Seybolt's introductory comments and questions will give you the basis for discussion.

Soo, Chin-yee. Eighth moon: the true story of a young girl's life in communist China, by Sansan as told to Bette Lord. New York: Harper & Row, 1964. 213 pp. Hardcover. Out-of-print.

The girl, aged 4, was left behind when her parents and older sister came to the U.S. Sixteen years later she was reunited with her family. The story is written by her older sister. This takes a critical view of life in communist China.

Women hold up half the sky. Berkeley: Yenan Books, 1975. 38 pp. Paper. $1.00 from Yenan Books, 1986 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704.

Eight reprints from Peking review and China reconstructs, 1973-1975, on the subject of women in modern China. Hsu Kuang, "Women's liberation through struggle"; Tsui Yu-lan, "How we women won equality"; Li Chen, "Women take part in productive labour"; Liu Chao, "Safeguarding women's interests"; Hsing Yen-tzu, "Training women cadres"; Hsu Kwang, "Women's liberation is a component part of the proletarian revolution"; "Talking of women's liberation"; Wu Hsiu-mei, et al., "Breaking down male supremacy." Also, Lu Hsun, "On women's liberation" (1933).

Audiovisuals

China today. 1971. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Color. 29 minutes. $23 rental from Film, Inc., 1144 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette, IL 60091.

A documentary on the life style of the modern Chinese people. Reviewing this film for the University of California Extension Media Center, Daniel Bickley wrote: "....combines concise, intelligent narration, reasonable impartiality, and a smooth visual structural continuity into an outstanding and readily understandable presentation. If I could show only one short film to a group that knew little or nothing about China (a common classroom situation), I would choose either this one or Greene's People's Communes." (Lifelong learning, Vol XLV, No. 19, September 8, 1975, pp. 16-17).

Life in China: mill worker's family. 1971. Myra Roper. Black and white. 17 minutes. $7.50 rental from Department of Photography and Cinema, Ohio State University, 156 West 19th Avenue, Columbus 43210.

A highly recommended film about a mill worker, her husband, child and mother-in-law. Shows individualism and humanism in Communist China.

People's communes. 1973. Felix Greene. Color. 25 minutes. $22 rental from University of California Extension Media Center, Berkeley, CA 94720.

"Excellent introduction to the life of China's 600 million peasants as well as to the means by which China has reached self-sufficiency in food production." (University of California Extension Media Center, Films, 1975-1976, p. 156.) See also comments under China today.

Women in China. 1977. Betty McAfee. Color. 27 minutes. $40 rental, $375 sale from Open Window Films, 1226 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709.

The only film specifically about women in modern China which fits into classroom time and budgets, this one has the advantage of being shot originally in more portable and less obtrusive Super 8. An overview which captures the spirit of change as well as the remnants of tradition.

Overview of African-American Women: During Slavery and Jimcrow

Carolyn Reese

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Student Learning Materials 409

INTRODUCTION

African-American women have suffered the double jeopardy of racism and sexism. Their ancestors, predominantly women from West Africa, had enjoyed freedom and self-sufficiency as defined by their culture. When Black women and men were brought to America as slaves, they had to live among people who devalued their culture and traditions. African-American women have experienced racism as an often greater obstacle than sexism.

African-American women's tradition of self-sufficiency became a major factor in their survival. Within the slave community, they achieved a high degree of status and power. When slavery ended, they continued to call upon their survival skills to cope with American society's systematic denial of work to Black men. Often Black women had to be the sole economic contributor to the family in a white society where the prevailing sexist belief was that respectable women did not work. Thus, both sexism and racism operated to oppress the Black woman. The work available to Black women has been low paying and low status, again because of both racism and sexism. The African-American woman has had to work out of economic necessity; she has rarely had the luxury of deciding for herself whether or not to work outside the home or what kind of work she would like to do.

In this overview, we are going to look at African-American women's roles in the years of extreme repression -- slavery and the jimcrow years that came after. Jimcrow* was the name given to the sheep-carding instrument that was used by slave owners to comb their slaves' hair, and was also the term used to describe the laws and customs in the United

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* Jimcrow was also the name of a song, ca. 1830's, about a Black man. Both whites and Blacks have used the term to refer to any method used to keep African-Americans "in their place."

States which prevented ex-slaves from enjoying their rights as American citizens after slavery was abolished. The jimcrow years span the 1880's through the 1930's. Although the repression of Black people in jimcrow America was not always as immediately obvious as it had been in slavery, for many the effect was just as severe.

In these painful years, women had few, if any, viable choices in their lives. Yet, there were amazing instances of Black women creating opportunities to resist oppression or to secure the survival of their families or to express their creative powers.

Concepts to Define:

culture
kinship
extended families
matrilineal
matricentric
immigration
migration

TEACHER'S NOTE: It is helpful to start a timeline which the class may use throughout this unit. Begin with some major historical dates (beginning of slavery, Civil War, Emancipation Proclamation, World War I, etc.), and add to the timeline as historical events or dates are mentioned. Include events from women's experiences in other cultures -- for example, Chinese-American women. If readings are assigned, try to determine their approximate dates and include them on the timeline. If students do research on their ancestors, place the dates of their relatives' immigrations or major migration dates on the line. (One class included each student's birthdate.) A large line which extends across a wall is effective. The relevant part of the longer historical chronology for African-American, General U.S. History and Chinese-American events on page 501 will be especially helpful to you as background for this activity.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Slavery (1600's - 1863)

Jamestown, Virginia, the first English settlement in America, was established in 1607. Twelve years later, in 1619, 20 Africans were brought to Jamestown as indentured servants. Three of the 20 were women. Since they were not slaves, these first African-Americans were supposed to gain their freedom when their time of indenture was over. However, Virginia and Maryland created laws in the 1660's that made all Blacks slaves for life. From then on, as the colonies grew and cheap labor was needed, all Africans brought to America came as slaves.

Slavery was not a regional issue. Although slavery in the North was abolished state by state long before it was prohibited in the South, free Blacks lived a precarious life throughout America -- with limited employment, little education and the fear of being kidnapped and sold again into slavery.

Most slaves lived on small farms or in cities where they worked with their masters as artisans, servants, or tradespeople. Large plantations with gangs of slaves were unusual and mainly occurred after 1700.

While conditions of slavery varied, it is undisputed that slaves had few human and no civil rights. As property, they could be bought and sold. Few white Americans were concerned with keeping slave families together. In fact, men and women could be purposely kept apart. They could be brought together primarily to have children and then separated again with their children being sold away from them.

There was a concerted effort to make transplanted Africans conform as quickly as possible to their new environment. Thus, all traces of the African culture were sharply discouraged. The slaves were forced to become Christians and any activity that represented African religious rituals was harshly stopped, as were activities of African traditional social organization and tribal allegiances. Most owners were afraid to let their slaves become educated and had strict rules forbidding them to learn to read and write. Aspects of African culture did survive; this attests to the enormous spirit of resistance that was present in the African-American slave communities throughout these years.

Slaves were brutally overworked and subject to terrible health conditions. Physical abuse was frequent, particularly toward any slave caught trying to escape. There was no court slaves could appeal to, no people to protect them. As Charles Pettigrew, a large planter in North Carolina, stated in 1806, "Slavery and tyranny must go together -- and ... there is no such thing as having an obedient and useful slave without painful exercise of undue and tyrannical authority."[1]

The Civil War (1860-1864)

African-Americans were involved in the Civil War struggles from the beginning. At the outbreak of war, many freed Black women eagerly offered their services as teachers, cooks, nurses, spies and scouts. As the northern armies marched southward, they liberated the slaves. Thousands of slaves then followed Union troops to join the ranks of the northern Blacks who fought in the Civil War.

In 1863 President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. For African-Americans, this was a time of great jubilation. Susie King Taylor, serving as a nurse to a regiment of Black volunteer Union soldiers, writes of how they celebrated their freedom:

> On the first of January, 1863, we held services for the purpose of listening to the reading of

> President Lincoln's proclamation...It was a glorious day for us all, and we enjoyed every minute of it, and as a fitting close to the crowning event of this occasion we had a grand barbecue. 2

Burdened with enforced illiteracy, many of the freed slaves were eager to become educated. Northern abolitionists and church groups mobilized to help them. As soon as the Union troops arrived, and in the midst of much confusion, teachers recruited from the North opened schools. Soon their numbers were increased by volunteers from the South, and by 1869, there were 9,000 teachers for the freed people. Over 45% of these were women, many of them Black.[3]

The zeal of these women teachers, matched by the eagerness of their pupils, exudes from the accounts we have of this period. One African-American teacher, Mary S. Peake, began a school in 1861 in Virginia, near the spot where the first ship of African slaves landed in 1619. Mary Peake contracted tuberculosis and died two years after starting the school. Her biographer, Lewis Lockwood, described in 1863 how she continued teaching to the end:

> In these multiplied labors, she exhibited a martyr spirit of the true type. Often when she was confined to her bed, her pupils would be found around her, drawing knowledge as it were from her very life. 4

Reconstruction (1865-1877)

During the Reconstruction Era, which immediately followed the Civil War, African-Americans in the South made some significant gains. Three constitutional amendments were passed: (1) Slavery was abolished in all states (13th Amendment); (2) Citizenship was granted to all ex-slaves (14th Amendment); and, (3) Voting rights were given to Black males (15th Amendment). As a result of these political gains, Black men were elected to public office on all levels of government.

During Reconstruction, the United States government set up the Freedman's Bureau. One mission of the bureau was to help educate ex-slaves. Within five years after the end of the war, one quarter of a million Black children were being educated in over 4,300 schools in the South.[5] Many of their teachers were Black women from both the North and the South. For the first time, African-Americans could travel where they liked, own land, enter into contracts and have access to the court system. The Freedman's Bureau assisted them in finding land and jobs, and Blacks began to believe they could totally participate in the life of America.

Jimcrow Years -- Reaction and Repression

Twenty-five years after the Civil War, gains made by African-Americans in the South were almost completely lost; the United States government had turned away from its responsibility of ensuring equality for African-Americans. The reasons for this change were complex and many, but the results were that (1) Black men were effectively disenfranchised (criteria for voting were created which Blacks, because of their historical condition as slaves, were unprepared to meet); (2) the Freedman's Bureau was abolished; (3) federal soldiers were withdrawn from the South in 1877, leaving no federal protection of the rights of Black citizens; (4) work and mobility were again limited for African-Americans; and, (5) white men, often the same men who had led the South during the war, again held all government offices and controlled most institutions of power.

What secured the white man's power was a series of restrictive jimcrow laws that were passed to keep Black people "in their place." Coinciding with these laws was a reign of terror directed toward the Black community; threats, economic sanctions, burnings, lynchings, and rapes were used to "enforce" jimcrow laws.

In 1896, the United States Supreme Court upheld these jimcrow laws by establishing the doctrine of "separate but equal" (Plessy vs. Ferguson). This ruling allowed each state to keep Blacks and whites apart and, usually, in unequal conditions. The segregated school system is one example where "separate" was clearly not "equal"; white schools paid their teachers better salaries, had larger facilities, more programs, activities and materials. The following are examples of jimcrow laws:[6]

1870	Georgia	First separate school system.
1900	South Carolina	Separate railroad cars for whites and Blacks.
1910	Baltimore, Md.	Blacks and whites prohibited from living on the same block.
1915	South Carolina	Separate entrances, working rooms, pay windows, water glasses, etc., for Black and white workers in the same factory.

ECONOMIC POWER

Focus Questions:

In looking for spheres of economic power in the lives of African-American women, see if they have

- *control over the work they do;*
- *the right to own and dispose of property;*
- *the right to have businesses;*
- *control over their earnings;*
- *opportunities to find work they value.*

During Slavery

The primary reason Africans were brought to America was to be used as a source of cheap labor. We therefore begin our examination of the power of African-American women in slavery during the jimcrow years by looking at their economic situation.

DISCUSSION:

Like African-Americans, many Chinese-Americans and other nationalities were brought to the U.S. for cheap labor (although not as slaves).

Do students know if any of their ancestors were brought or "lured" to America to work on large projects (mining, agriculture, railroad building)?

Do students feel that they are, or have been, used as "cheap labor" on any jobs they held?

Since slaves were considered to be property, they had no economic power except in the standards of value placed on them according to the work they did. This value gave them a degree of economic worth and therefore a degree of power.

Field Slaves: What one did as a slave defined one's value. On large agricultural plantations, particularly those that produced sugar and rice, field slaves had the lowest status. The work of planting and picking was extremely hard. A slave recalls the life of a field hand:

> The hands are required to be in the cotton fields as soon as it is light in the morning, and, with the exception of ten or fifteen minutes, which is given them at noon to swallow their allowance of cold bacon, they are not permitted to be a moment idle until it is too dark to see....
>
> The day's work over in the field, the baskets are "toted"...to the gin-house, where the cotton is weighed.... A slave never approaches the gin-house with his basket of cotton but with fear. If it falls short in weight...he knows that he must suffer.... After weighing, follow the whippings; and then the baskets are carried to the cotton house, and their contents stored

> away like hay, all hands being sent in to tramp it down.... 7

It was not unusual to have a woman rate as the most valuable field hand on a plantation. Women toiled in the fields alongside men, and received the same punishment as men. Even those who were pregnant and had small children were treated without compassion. Women field hands had a longer day than men because, in addition to the usual work load, they had to cook, care for their children, spin, weave and sew.

House Slaves: The slave who worked in the "big house" was supposed to have a higher status. Yet, the work there was just as demanding as in the fields. The following is an example of the trials of the household seamstresses, as witnessed by Angelina Grimke Weld:

> I have also known instances where seamstresses were kept in cold entries to work by the staircase lamps for one or two hours, every evening in winter -- they could not see without standing up all the time, though the work was often too large and heavy for them to sew upon it in that position without great inconvenience, and yet they were expected to do their work as well with their cold fingers, and standing up, as if they had been sitting by a comfortable fire and provided with the necessary light. House slaves suffer a great deal also from not being allowed to leave the house without permission. If they wish to even go for a draught of water, they must ask leave, and if they stay longer than the mistress thinks necessary, they are liable to be punished... 8

House slaves cleaned and cooked. The cook usually had great status and in large plantations may have had the responsibility of overseeing many kitchen assistants. Some female house slaves also learned to weave cloth, to quilt, to sew clothes and to make baskets. Basket-making was an art Black women brought with them from Africa. Most house slaves were trained as well to take care of the personal needs of their master and mistress.

Since the wives and daughters of planters did no manual labor, they usually did not take care of their children. This left childrearing to the female slaves--mammies, who often became great authorities in the lives of their charges. It could be said that in some cases mammies exercised a kind of covert political power.

Working in the house further linked the worlds of the female house slaves and white women. Because of the sharp division between the activities of southern plantation men and women, the plantation women spent more time in the company of the slaves and their children than their husbands did. Black and white women sometimes delivered each others' babies and shared household secrets.[9] But while the white woman developed a debilitating dependency on the Black woman, the Black woman developed tremendous self-sufficiency. In fact, this situation resulted in a loss of prestige and power for the white woman; she might have been admired for her social graces but she was not respected, or at least acknowledged, for her ability to cope.[10]

DISCUSSION:

Ask students what their images of white women living in the South at this period of history are. Where did they get these pictures from?

The slaves owned by small farmers were somewhat better off than field slaves on large plantations. The small farmer often had to work beside his slaves. Since there were fewer slaves, they learned and did a wider range of jobs. Slave women, though, were not taught highly skilled jobs. A former slave talked about the male-female work differences in the following way:

> Pa was a sower of all seeds. He was a yardman, houseman, plowman, gardener, blacksmith, carpenter, and anything else they chose him to be.... (My mother) cooked, washed, ironed, spun, nursed and labored in the field. She made as good a field hand as he did a cook. 11

Skilled craftspeople were valued highly by whites. But since Black women were not taught marketable crafts, only domestic skills (sewing, ironing, nursing and cooking) offered them any chance of improving their condition. Most freed women had to find service-oriented jobs, as household domestics or washerwomen.

COMPARISON: Recall the wider options for making money that women had in Africa.

In the Slave Quarters: The Black woman undertook the ultimate responsibility for the care -- and survival -- of the family and slave community. In addition to her work for the master, the slave woman had to take care of her children. She also might be assigned to cook and make clothes for the slave community at large.

African-American women were responsible for maintaining good health in the slave quarters. This was a difficult task because the slaves were usually poorly housed and doctors were not called for unless a slave were near death. As a result, most women became skilled at using common weeds near their homes as remedies for illnesses. They became expert herbalists whose knowledge might be used to cure their master's family as well as their own. Some women became good midwives -- work that later earned them money when they became free.

The resourcefulness of slave women made them as important to their community as slave men. Given the conditions of slavery, everyone had to cooperate in order to survive and this gave everyone a more or less equal and valued status within their group.

DISCUSSION:

Think of what you may know of tribal life, or nomadic life. Is there the same degree of hierarchy and status there as there is in American life today? (The relatively democratic customs of the Eskimos would offer a good example of community cooperation.) Why is this so?

> *Have you ever been in a situation where a group depended upon the skills each member brought to it rather than on the status of the individuals? Does your participation in a team sport or in a musical group, etc., give you a sense of the value given to each team member in order to get the job done?*

Even if her economic power during slavery was sharply limited, within her family and community the African-American woman was highly valued and had the power to influence the people around her.

> *COMPARISON: In these years, women in America in all stations of life worked hard and learned to do a variety of tasks. Even the southern landed gentry woman, although she did not do manual labor, had great responsibility for every detail of running the large household, including organizing the production of items such as cloth, canned goods, candles. She also was responsible for educating her children.*
>
> *Coexisting with the large property owners were poor white families who greatly outnumbered their wealthy neighbors and in whose families women did manual work. The following is a description of a southern backcountry woman.*
>
> It is said of this Mrs. Jones from whose house we came that she is a very civil woman and shows nothing of ruggedness or immodesty in her appearance, yet she will carry a gun in the woods and kill deer, turkeys, etc., shoot down wild cattle, catch and tie hogs, knock down beef with an ax, and perform the most manful exercises as well as most men in these parts. 12
>
> *The lives of these women were physically exhausting.*
>
> *Slaves were apt to look down on the whites who barely eked out a living on their dirt farms. In Jubilee by Margaret Walker, the slave Vyry comments about the lot of the whites in winter, the season of sickness and death:*
>
> Always, too, there were the poor whites, po buckra lived back in the pine barrens and on the rocky hills. They suffered more than the Black slaves for there was no one to provide them with the rations of corn meal and salt pork which was the daily lot of the slaves, and therefore the Black people were taught by their owners to have contempt for this "poor white trash." These buckra were always coming

around in the winter knocking on the kitchen door and telling Aunt Sally that Master said they could have corn to make bread for their hungry young. 13

TEACHER'S NOTE: Before presenting information about women's economic life in the jimcrow years, you might have the class look for indications of economic power or the lack of it in the information just presented. This gives students a beginning sense of what to look for when thinking of power and how to "dig" for examples of it. We suggest putting these two columns on the board:

Women's Power	*Women's Lack of Power*
if valued field hands	*were sold and treated as property*
if worked in "big house"	*could not own land, home, etc.*
if a mammy	*did hard work with no pay*
relied on by white women	*not taught marketable crafts*
were valuable to slave community	
possibly more secure than poor whites	

During Jimcrow Years

After they were freed, most ex-slaves left their masters. Many hoped the government would provide land for them so they could support themselves in the way in which they were skilled -- farming. However, very little land was set aside for Black Americans and the years immediately following the Civil War were ones of continuing disruptions with millions of people uprooted and on the move. The glimmer of hope of the Reconstruction years faded as many of the old restrictions on African-Americans were reinstated.

Working to Survive in the South (Sharecropping): "Jimcrow" became so pervasive and restrictive that African-Americans had increasing difficulty finding good jobs. In the South, since most freed people continued to farm, many women worked in the fields clearing land, hoeing, picking cotton. Some worked as maids, cooks, laundresses, seamstresses or midwives. No matter how they earned their living, all Black women had also to take care of their homes and families.

Although it was possible after the Civil War for Blacks to own land, jimcrow laws began to limit these rights. Many women and men had no choice but to become tenants working on land for white farmers. This system was called sharecropping: planters paid no wages for labor and workers paid no rent for land; instead, both shared in the future crop. Usually the sharecropper (worker) paid a part of the forthcoming crop for the use of the land, and another part for the use of tools, seeds and animals. The sharecropper was caught in a cycle of continual borrowing against future crops, which placed both him and the planter in debt and tied the so-called freeman almost as closely to the land and white men as in slavery.[14]

The effect on the spirit of some of the men and women caught again in bondage was severe. In The Third Life of Grange Copeland, Alice Walker describes what the experiences of being a sharecropper meant to one of the women, Mem.

> Being forced to move from one sharecropper's cabin to another was something she hated. She hated the arrogance of the white men who put them out, for one reason or another, without warning or explanation. She hated leaving a home she'd already made and fixed up with her own hands. She hated leaving her flowers, which she always planted whenever she got her hands on flower seeds. Each time she stepped into a new place, with its new, and usually bigger, rat holes, she wept. Each time she had to clean cow manure out of a room to make it habitable for her children, she looked as if she had been dealt a death blow. 15

> *COMPARISON: There are similar hardships in (1) the experiences of Chinese-Americans who migrated as farmworkers in the West; (2) the experiences of poor whites in the same post-war period (In Jubilee, Chapter 44 describes the condition of a poor white sharecropping family); and, (3) the experience of any poor family who is always moving and subject to the whims of the owners of their home.*

Working to Survive in the North: Many African-Americans sought to escape the extreme restrictions in the South by moving North or moving West, where life was supposed to be freer. A song from the period rings with this sense of escape:

> I'm tired of this Jim Crow, gonna leave this
>   Jim Crow town,
> Doggone my black soul, I'm sweet Chicago bound,
> Yes, I'm leavin' here, from this old Jim Crow town.[16]

A series of crop failures in the South after 1900 also forced many tenant farmers to look for work elsewhere.

Although there were fewer jimcrow restrictions in the North, African-Americans found jimcrow attitudes just as prevalent when it came to finding work. The North was still experiencing industrial growth, and most African-Americans sought manufacturing jobs in the cities. However, these cities had also attracted thousands of immigrants from Europe, and Blacks found themselves in direct competition with them. (After 1900, immigrants were arriving mainly from central and southeastern Europe and settling in the port cities or in nearby factory towns. By 1910, these immigrants, together with African-Americans, made up two-thirds of all workers in twenty-one major American industries.)[17]

Employers tended to choose these newly arrived immigrants over Black American men. Unions excluded African-Americans, which meant that apprenticeship programs were closed to them. The Irish were hired over Blacks on the docks; European immigrants replaced Blacks in hotel jobs, and as early as the 1880's, Italians predominated over African-Americans in barbering. African-American women were able to find work, however, with the result that Black women often became the major or sole support of their families.

Prejudice against the immigrants never reached the scale of that practiced against the African-Americans. In fact, European immigrants arriving here quickly assimilated racist attitudes; no matter how poorly they were treated, it was still possible for them to look down on people of other races.

DISCUSSION:

Ask male students how they would feel if they were (1) denied jobs they once had access to, or (2) their wives or daughters had to work to support them for long periods of time.

Even though African-American women found work, they had extremely limited work options. As late as 1930, three out of five Black women employed were in domestic and personal service. In New York in the 1920's, many Black women were forced to resort to the "hiring market." They gathered early in the morning on certain streets where wealthier women came, looked them over and then hired them for 25¢ an hour.[18]

In domestic and service work, Black women faced severe discrimination. Young European immigrant girls were in demand as maids, cooks, and governesses. This left only the heavier jobs, such as scrubbing and laundry work, to Black women. Thus, the jimcrow years saw Black women still taking care of domestic needs of white families, but, in some cases, with less influence than they had had in slavery.

Work Options Expand During World War I: Only during World War I, when foreign immigration had nearly stopped and young white men had left their jobs to fight overseas, were there opportunities for Blacks in Northern factories. Thousands of African-Americans left the South during the war years to seek work in the cities.

Before the First World War, only the textile and tobacco industries of the South had employed African-American women in unskilled factory work, but between 1910 and 1920, more than 48,000 Black women entered Northern factories, most often steam laundries. Even with the war labor shortage, few of the women were allowed to work at machines. They were confined instead to the same sort of menial work Black women had done as slaves.

While white women had entered the clerical and sales force as early as the Civil War days, African-American women were excluded from these occupations until the 1960's. White women also had entered government service during the Civil War, but it was not until World War I that Black women were grudgingly admitted. Even then they endured quotas and segregation.[19]

These limited job options were highly frustrating. In the novel Daddy Was a Number Runner, no matter how much 12-year-old Francie, living in Harlem in the 1930's, "don't like livin' around here no more," she sees no way out.

> "Move over," I said, and sat down beside her. There was nothing else to say. Either you was

a whore like China Doll or you worked in a laundry or did day work or ran poker games or had a baby every year. We sat there, Sukie rubbing her nose with the back of her hand and sniffling and me getting ready to join her any minute. [20]

COMPARISON: It is useful to get a picture of the employment scene for women in the population as a whole in the early 20th century. With increased industrialization in the 19th century there was a steady increase in the employment of women outside the home. Thus, in 1900 women wage earners were 20% of the population. Although these women worked as hard as men and for the same reasons, unlike men they had to justify working for pay.

Along with industrialization came a growing middle class whose expectation was that married women should not work outside the home. Those women from poorer families who had no choice but to work thus went against the prevailing view of what women should do and were generally looked down upon. They also carried the double burden of working in the market place and doing unpaid domestic work at home.

The following account by Gladys Caldwell shows that many unskilled, poor white women had limited job choices and suffered the double duty of low paid labor and unpaid housework. Gladys and her family were South Carolina mill workers in the 1920's. Black women would also work at this mill but would work separately from the white women, do different work and be paid less.

I have a husband and five children. I'm a weaver...I get paid by the day...

I get up at four to start breakfast for the children. When you got five young 'uns it takes a while to dress 'em. The oldest is nine and she helps a lot. The others are seven, five, four and three...

After I've got the children dressed and fed, I take 'em to the mill nursery, that is three of 'em. Two go to school, but after school they go to the nursery until I get home from the mill. The mill don't charge anythin' to keep the children there. I couldn't afford it anyway. We have breakfast about five, and I spend the rest of the time from five to seven gettin' the children ready and cleanin' up the house. That's about the only time I get to clean up. Ruby washes the dishes. Ruby is nine. My husband and I go to the mill at seven.

I work in the weavin' room and I get $1.80 a day. That's $9.95 a week for five and a half days. I work from seven to six with an hour for dinner. I run up and down the alleys all day. No, they ain't no chance to sit down, except once in a long time when my work's caught up, but that's almost never.

At noon I run home and get dinner for the seven of us. The children come home from school and the nursery...We have beans and baked sweets and bread and butter, and sometimes fat-back and sometimes pie, if I get time to bake it. Of course I make my own bread.

It takes about $16 a week to feed us....

After dinner I wash the dishes and run back to the mill. We don't have any sink but there's a faucet with runnin' water on the back porch and a regular toilet there, too....

When the whistle blows at six I come home and get supper. Then I put the children to bed. There's a double bed here and a double bed in that other room and a double bed out in the back room. That's for seven of us. The baby's pretty young. I s'pose all of the children 'll go into the mills when they get a bit older. We'll need the money all right. Yes, my father and mother were mill workers, too, and they're still livin' and workin'. He gets $18 a week and my mother gets about $3 a week for workin' mornin's...I went through the third grade in school and then I went to work in the mill. I was nine years old when I started work at Number 4 in Pelzer. My husband didn't go to school neither but he managed to pick up readin' and he reads books. Yes, we take a paper.

When supper is over I have a chance to make the children's clothes. Yes, I make 'em all, and all my own clothes, too. I never buy a dress at a store. I haven't no sewin' machine but I borrow the use of one. On Saturday night I wash the children in a big wash-tub and heat the water on the oil stove. Then I do the week's ironin'. I send the washin' to the laundry. I just couldn't do that, too. It costs nearly $2 a week. Our rent in this house is only $1.30 a week for the four rooms and we get water and electric lights free.

I always make a coat last seven or eight years. My husband gets a suit every two years but he ain't had one for the last six years. He got an overcoat about four years ago. Things have been pretty hard...

> Maybe my children ought to get away from the mill village, but if they went anywhere they would go back to the farm and there ain't no use doin' that. The farmers haven't got it as good as we have...
>
> Sunday's about the only day I get to rest any. Seems as if I just have to have a little rest then. 21

DISCUSSION:

What work choices did Gladys have in her life?

What influenced her to work in the mill?

What possible differences would there be in the conditions of Gladys's life if she were a Black woman living in the same town? (Black women have to face racism as well as poverty and sexism.)

Emergence of Black Professional Women: There was a growing African-American middle class in the jimcrow years which trained their daughters for professional fields and organized scholarships for women. Nursing and teaching were two careers where some training might be found, although admission to institutes of higher education was highly restricted. The following is an excerpt from an article on the life of one woman who managed a higher education. Note the double obstacles of sexism and racism Fannie Coppin had to overcome in the 1860's.

> Fannie Jackson Coppin was born a slave, but as a child she was purchased by her aunt and sent to live in Massachusetts. There she worked in a place where she could go to school and secure the equivalent of an elementary school education. With the help of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Coppin was able to attend Oberlin College in 1860. She did well and went on to hold a teaching job, eventually becoming the principal of the Female Department at the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. She describes her education at Oberlin.
>
> > My aunt in Washington still helped me and I was able to pay my way to Oberlin...Oberlin was then the only College in the United States where colored students were permitted to study. The

> faculty did not forbid a woman to take the gentlemen's course, but they did not advise it. There was plenty of Latin and Greek in it, and as much mathematics as one could shoulder...It was custom in Oberlin that forty students from the junior and senior classes were employed to teach the preparatory classes. As it was not time for the juniors to begin their work, the Faculty informed me that it was their purpose to give me a class, but I was to distinctly understand that if the pupils rebelled against my teaching, they did not intend to force it. Fortunately for my training at the normal school, and my own dear love of teaching, though there was a little surprise on the faces of some when they came into the class, and saw the teacher, there were no signs of rebellion. The class went on increasing in numbers until it had to be divided, and I was given both divisions.
>
> When I was within a year of graduation, an application came from a Friends school in Philadelphia, for a colored woman who could teach Greek, Latin and higher mathematics. The answer returned was: "We have the woman, but you must wait a year for her."
>
> ...I never rose to recite in my classes at Oberlin but I felt that I had the honor of the whole African race upon my shoulders. I felt that, should I fail, it would be ascribed to the fact that I was colored. 22

In these jimcrow years a number of women also managed, through much work and creativity, to establish schools to educate and encourage Black students.

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Some students could read Mary McLeod Bethune's "College on a Garbage Dump," and then do research on other aspects of her life.

African-American Women in the Arts: Music and religion have always been strong elements of African-American culture. By the 1920's, blues, gospel singing and jazz had evolved from the old spirituals and were being heard by a larger audience. There was a rising middle class segment in the

Black community -- businesses, churches, political clubs, insurance companies, entertainment clubs. This helped give a solid financial base to these new creative endeavors. In Harlem, in New York, this period in the 1920's and 30's is called the Harlem Renaissance.

Some women found that it was finally possible to support themselves while they explored their artistic creativity and pursued intellectual goals. From the 1920's on, talented women could seek careers as singers and dancers, and for a few, this was a way out of a depressing job market. Billie Holiday wrote in her autobiography, Lady Sings the Blues, that she pleaded with a night club boss to let her sing because "I had decided I was through turning tricks as a call girl. But I also decided I wasn't going to be anyone's damn maid...I was 15 then."[23]

The emerging group of Black artists also evoked the growing interest of whites in African-American culture. As Langston Hughes said, "the Negro was in vogue" and, as a result, Harlem became the most famous ethnic community in the world.[24] Budding female writers and artists were received and financially supported by the majority community, and entertainers performed "on white time," which meant in white theaters. Yet, support and interest does not mean acceptance, and Black artists, whatever their field, were often subjected to racism.

Obviously, of far greater significance than the white acceptance of Black artists was the mutual support writers, poets, painters and entertainers found in one another's work. African-American women began to write about themselves and the experiences of other Black women. Gwendolyn Brooks, for example, created images about Black womanhood that were taken directly from her life.

> The people in a little poem called "The Vacant Lot" really existed and really did those things. An example: "Mrs. Coley's three-flat brick/Isn't

there any more./All done with seeing her fat
little form/Burst out of the basement door..."
Really happened! That lot is still vacant on
the street where I was raised. (My mother
still lives on the street.) 25

TEACHER'S NOTE: If you assign autobiographies of Black women in the arts, have students notice (1) personal and social influences on the woman that encouraged her to pursue her goal; (2) personal and social obstacles to her success; and, (3) personal and social opportunities promoting success.

TEACHER'S NOTE: Most Black women did not become well-known singers, musicians, artists, writers or scholars. In slavery it was a punishable crime for Black women to read or write; in jimcrow, they did not have the time to paint or to sculpt or to perform. Yet, through it all, the creative nature of the Black woman stayed very much alive.

Author Alice Walker discovered that most women developed creative skills that have been largely unacknowledged in our society -- skills that were a source of intense private joy. In a selection from her piece, In Search of Our Mother's Gardens, Ms. Walker tells of discovering her mother's source of creativity. The following selection could be read aloud in class by you or by a student.

In the late 1920's my mother ran away from home to marry my father. Marriage, if not running away, was expected of 17-year-old girls. By the time she was 20, she had two children and was pregnant with a third. Five children later, I was born. And this is how I came to know my mother: she seemed a large, soft, loving-eyed woman who was rarely impatient in our home. Her quick, violent temper was on view only a few times a year, when she battled with the white landlord who had the misfortune to suggest to her that her children did not need to go to school.

She made all the clothes we wore, even my brothers' overalls. She made all the towels and sheets we used. She spent the summers canning vegetables and fruits. She spent the winter evenings making quilts enough to cover all our beds.

During the "working" day, she labored beside -- not behind -- my father in the fields. Her day began before sunup, and did not end until late at night. There was never a moment for her to sit down, undisturbed, to unravel her own private thoughts; never a time free from interruption -- by work or the noisy inquiries of her many children. And yet, it is to my mother -- and all our mothers who were not famous -- that I went in search of the secret of what has fed that muzzled and often mutilated, but vibrant, creative spirit that the Black woman has inherited, and that pops out in wild and unlikely places to this day.

But when, you will ask, did my overworked mother have time to know or care about feeding the creative spirit?

The artist that was and is my mother showed itself to me only after many years. This is what I finally noticed:

Like Mem, a character in The Third Life of Grange Copeland (by Alice Walker), my mother adorned with flowers whatever shabby house we were forced to live in. And not just your typical straggly country stand of zinnias, either. She planted ambitious gardens -- and still does -- with over 50 different varieties of plants that bloom profusely from early March until late November. Before she left home for the fields, she watered her flowers, chopped up the grass, and laid out new beds. When she returned from the fields she might divide clumps of bulbs, dig a cold pit, uproot and replant roses, or prune branches from her taller bushes or trees -- until night came and it was too dark to see.

Whatever she planted grew as if by magic, and her fame as a grower of flowers spread over three counties. Because of her creativity with her flowers, even my memories of poverty are seen through a screen of blooms -- sunflowers, petunias, roses, dahlias, forsythia, spirea, delphiniums, verbena ... and on and on.

And I remember people coming to my mother's yard to be given cuttings from her flowers; I hear again the praise showered on her because whatever rocky soil she landed on, she turned into a garden. A garden so brilliant with colors, so original in its design, so magnificent with life and creativity, that to this day people drive by our house in Georgia -- perfect strangers and imperfect strangers -- and ask to stand or walk among my mother's art.

I notice that it is only when my mother is working in her flowers that she is radiant, almost to the point of being invisible -- except as Creator: hand and eye. She is involved in work her soul must have. Ordering the universe in the image of her personal conception of Beauty.

Her face, as she prepares the Art that is her gift, is a legacy of respect she leaves to me, for all that illuminates and cherishes life. She had handed down respect for the possibilities -- and the will to grasp them.

For her, so hindered and intruded upon in so many ways, being an artist has still been a daily part of her life. This ability to hold on, even in very simple ways, is work Black women have done for a very long time. 26

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Ask students to discover and write about one source of creativity in either their mother or father, or their grandparents, or themselves. (Does this person tell stories well? Sing in the church choir? Whittle wood?) How does this creativity show itself? Where does it come from? Describe the satisfaction it brings.

In small groups students might develop creative approaches to presenting the material they are learning on African-American women to the class. Some suggestions include:

- *making a collage of drawings and pictures representing the lives of the women they are studying ;*
- *writing a dialogue between a Black woman who just moved north from the South and meets a young Chinese woman who has just joined her husband in this new country (circa 1890);*
- *acting out or dramatically reading a selection from one of the student readings ;*
- *creating a dance depicting the plot of one of the student readings ;*
- *singing or playing some of the songs made famous by Black female performers (preferably an early singer: Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith).*

DISCUSSION:

This is a time for students to tie together their thoughts on the economic power of African-American women in the restrictive years of slavery and jimcrow and make comparisons with women of other backgrounds.

In slavery, what types of work did the Black woman do? Compare her work and that of traditional African women. Compare her economic power and that of traditional African women. Were there any spheres where she did have some status and power?

In jimcrow years, describe ways in which her economic life was the same as in slavery. Describe ways in which her economic life was different. Did she have less economic power, more, or about the same as in slavery? Compare the work experiences of early Chinese-American immigrant women to African-American women.

What were some of the major factors that set limits on the types of work minority women could do? (racist hiring of dominant culture, sexist hiring, lack of education, competition of European immigrants, responsibilities of home).

Many writers talk about African-American women in terms of their ability to survive. Is ability to survive a form of power?

PERSONAL POWER

Focus Questions:

In looking for spheres of power in the personal lives of African-American women, see if they have control over:

- *the use of their bodies;*
- *the people to whom they relate;*
- *whom they marry;*
- *whether or not to have children;*
- *ending a bad marriage;*
- *where they live;*
- *the standards of beauty for women;*
- *whether or not they gain respect.*

In Africa a woman was given some rights in marriage; she was sacrosanct in her role as mother, and she had a bond with her children which remained a steady source of support throughout her life. In America during slavery and the restrictive jimcrow years, women's personal power and the traditional male-female roles changed greatly from what they had been in Africa.

> *TEACHER'S NOTE: If any of the following information becomes too sensitive to present in lecture form, rely more on the suggested readings. Let the women authors describe their lives and let the students draw from these narratives knowledge about the personal power of African-American women.*

Motherhood

During Slavery: In slavery, African-American women were the most exploited of all American women. And, in many respects, slavery was more severe for women than for men because women also bore and reared children.

The slave woman was valued for her child-bearing ability. Women who had had two children were considered "good breeders" and as such were worth a high price. A woman might also be "let out" to other plantations to bear children.[27] A slave woman's children could be held as hostages if slaves tried to escape. More often, daughters and sons were taken from their mothers and sold; mother and children usually never saw each other after this. A few women killed themselves and their infants rather than continue experiencing this cruelty.

> *COMPARISON: In old China, there was a high suicide rate among women; such suicide was a form of escape from inhuman conditions.*

Since children were usually kept with the mother in the early years, women became the stable element of the slave family. They communicated their unique Black culture to their children and taught them the lessons necessary for a slave's physical and spiritual survival.

> *COMPARISON: The Chinese-American women were responsible for maintaining ties with China and keeping Chinese customs. One Chinese-American woman wrote: "My mother was a living 'vessel of culture.' She carried out the rites of ancestor worship, taught us Chinese etiquette, observed the traditional holidays with tantalizing delicacies -- in essence, she taught us that we were Chinese and that things Chinese were best."* 28

Black women in slavery tried against tremendous odds to be with their children as much as they could. Frederick Douglass, great freedom fighter, lecturer and writer, remembers how, when he was a young child sold to a faraway plantation, his mother would appear in the night to see him and hold him while he slept. For these few moments of motherhood, his mother, after working all day in the cotton fields, walked twelve miles barefoot in the night, and then back to her own plantation again, while knowing she had to be back at work before her absence was known. Fannie Moore of South Carolina also recalled:

> My mammy she work in de field all day and piece and quilt all night ... I never see how my mammy stand such hard work. She stand up for her chillen though. De old overseer he hate my mammy, 'cause she fought him for beatin' her chillen. Why she get more whippin' for dat dan anythin' else. 29

During Jimcrow: When slavery was abolished, two-parent families were difficult to maintain. Because of their fragmented family experience during slavery, some men later failed to take responsibility for their families. Others were forced to move about to get work.[30] Partly to counter the absence of the father, matricentric (the mother at the head) extended families were formed which sometimes consisted of three generations of women in one household. This extended family household provided a structure for survival for poor families while allowing people to maintain strong loyalties to kin.[31]

Poverty also created the need to maintain a complex exchange and cooperation system. Food, child rearing, clothes, transportation were all shared or loaned. There was a domestic circle of kinspeople or friends who expected to help one another and did. This situation is also true in many low-income Black communities today. Josephine Carson, in Silent Voices, quotes one woman in the South who says: "A family is not two parents with children in a housing tract, in a house project ... A family is kin. All kin. The Black woman's milieu is among kin."[32] This extended family pattern provided the necessary resources to give the Black woman some personal power in spite of her limited economic power.

> *COMPARISON: Extended family structure has its roots in rural Africa.*
>
> *Extended family support systems are found in many new immigrant groups in America. In Chinese-American families, for example, loans for business or education usually are obtained from a family member rather than a financial institution.*

In the big cities in the North, such large kinship groups were more difficult to maintain. Where the father was absent or jobless, women with children were forced to turn to public institutions for sustenance. Although much has been written about the male loss of pride in this situation, it is not often enough pointed out that women also suffered as they saw institutions, usually white-controlled, assume some of their maternal responsibilities. Malcolm X describes what happened to his mother when she went on relief to support her eight children after their father was killed. He remembered how it hurt her pride to do this and how the constant interference of the "state people," who always threatened to take her children away if she slipped once, severely weakened her.

> We children watched our anchor giving way. It was something terrible that you couldn't get your hands on... 33

Many children from poor homes had little parental supervision because their mother worked long hours away from home. Often the oldest sister or brother was taught to take care of the younger siblings. (This sibling role recalls in some ways the "child-nurse" role which is found in Africa.)

The high status and unquestioned authority mothers had in Africa or had within the family even in slavery was shaken in the ghettos of the North. Because street life was predominant in urban ghettos, survival in the street sometimes became more important to children than the desires and teachings of their parents. Some Black women lost their children "to the streets" and their attempts to counter this reality were futile. Ann Petry's novel The Street poignantly highlights Lutie Johnson's attempts to protect her child from this environment which was foreign to her and destructive to him.

Mothers in the North wanted their children to have better lives than they had. One big concern was to keep their daughters from becoming domestics. In Daddy Was a Number Runner, the mother is furious when she finds that Francie has worked for the day cleaning someone's house.

> "You don't have to do no domestic work for nobody, Francie." (We was in the kitchen fixing dinner.) "You don't be no fool, you hear? You finish school and go on to college. Long as I live you don't have to scrub no white folks' floors or wash their filthy windows. What they think I'm spending my life on my knees in their kitchens for? So you can follow in my footsteps?" 34

Male-Female Relationships

During Slavery: Long-term relationships between women and men were discouraged during slavery. Slaves could not legally marry, yet some did. The difficulties in maintaining a good married relationship were great. The female house slave, overworked all day, might have to sleep on the floor in her mistress's room at night. The female field slave, after laboring during the day, was also responsible for cooking and feeding her children and other slaves, for midwifery, and, in her old age, for taking care of other slave children.[35]

As head of a family, the Black man was caught in an extremely binding situation. He was expected to expend all his energy providing for his master and thus could never become the main provider and protector of his own family. He could do nothing about any violence directed by whites toward his children or his wife. His wife could be sexually abused by the master and he could do nothing to prevent it. The political implications of this situation are clear -- the master, by asserting his sovereignty over the Black woman, also aimed a blow against the Black man.[36] The Black woman understood this dynamic -- understood that the white man's strategy was to try to destroy the self-esteem of the Black man. She was often able to give her man the support he needed to withstand this campaign against his integrity.[37]

The Black woman and man in slavery were strong allies. In some instances, the woman could help the man by speaking out on his behalf to the master.[38] The woman's strength did not undermine the man's; it supported him. She at times kept him from avenging an insult to her because the survival of both of them depended on this self-restraint. In part, because of the strong role Black women played in the family, the Black family experienced greater equality between men and women than most white families did in the period of slavery, or thereafter.

> *COMPARISON: In Africa, men and women had clear, sex-defined roles and tasks in marriage. In slavery, the separateness of these roles was in some ways broken down and some domestic jobs were shared.*

In spite of the tremendous odds against them, slave families held together and functioned. Stories abound of how Black men and women worked themselves to the bone to buy their mates and children out of slavery. The pain of separation was great, as this account of how Moses Grandy's wife is sold shows:

> (Moses Grandy, suspecting nothing, was standing in the street when the slave coffle passed with his wife in chains.)
>
> Mr. Rogerson was with them on his horse, armed with pistols. I said to him, "For God's sake, have you bought my wife?" He said he had; when I asked him what she had done, he said she had done nothing, but that her master wanted money. He drew out a pistol and said that if I went near the wagon on which she was, he would shoot me. I asked for leave to shake hands with her which he refused, but said I might stand at a distance and talk with her. My heart was so full that I could say very little ... I have never seen or heard from her from that day to this. I loved her as I love my life. [39]

During Jimcrow: Male-female relationships were strained in new ways during the jimcrow years. In slavery, long-term relationships were not expected, even though they did exist. But after slavery, African-Americans assumed they could achieve some economic successes and more easily maintain stable families. In reality, severe economic problems put an enormous burden on male-female relationships. The difficulties were compounded by the particular forms racist discrimination took. While in slavery both sexes worked, in the jimcrow years, men were systematically denied jobs. Furthermore, by 1920, more than half of all Americans lived in cities which could not supply enough jobs or housing.[40] Women usually could find work, even if only as domestics and this created great dissension between the sexes. This meant that a man, and the woman with him, had to struggle with the sense of powerlessness the society had forced on him.

Men and women responded to this painful dilemma in various ways. Some created families which remained intact and prospered. But a number found the weight of racism too overpowering. When a man could not protect and provide for his family, it seemed to him that his manhood was at stake. Some men turned in anger on their women. In Daddy Was a Number Runner, the father reacts to the mother's need to go up to the Bronx and find a day's work: "Why don't you stop nagging me, woman, you know I don't want you doing housework." Later, when she applies for welfare relief he is even more upset:

> Daddy jumped to his feet with surprising speed. The muscles in his neck bunched up and he opened his mouth but no words came. He looked like he was strangling.
>
> Mother winced as if the sight of him hurt her. "Your pride won't feed these children," she said quietly.
>
> "I'm a motherfucking man. Why can't you understand that?" 41

In The Third Life of Grange Copeland, an explosive novel of the rural south, the pattern is different but the male feeling of powerlessness and rage are the same. Ultimately, this destroys both husband and wife. Brownfield and Mem are sharecroppers where "sometimes, in that hopelessness, when cotton production was all that mattered in their work (and not even their cotton!), even love had stopped." In the following passage from the book, we see the beginnings of the agonizing decline of their once strong relationship.

> It was as if the white men said his woman needed no style, deserved no style, and therefore would get no style, and that they would always reserve the right to work the life out of him...

> His crushed pride, his battered ego, made him drag Mem away from schoolteaching. Her knowledge reflected badly on a husband who could scarcely read and write. It was his great ignorance that sent her into white homes as a domestic, his need to bring her down to his level! It was his rage at himself, and his life and his world that made him beat her for an imaginary attraction she aroused in other men, crackers, although she was no party to any of it. His rage and anger and his frustration ruled. His rage could and did blame everything, everything on her. And she accepted all his burdens along with her own and dealt with them from her own greater heart and greater knowledge. 42

The story also points up other ways women supported their men, at least in the home. As a child Brownfield noted that:

> His mother agreed with his father whenever possible ... He thought his mother was like their dog in some ways. She didn't have a thing to say that did not in some way show her submission to his father. 43

Later, Grange himself realized how he used women to support his feelings of manhood:

> Josie was necessary for his self-respect, necessary for his feeling of manliness. If I can never own nothing, he had told her, I will have women. 44

The type of work women had to do had its effects on their roles in marriage. In the chapter, "The South" in Silent Voices by Josephine Carson, we get a sense of the double life, almost double identity Black women had to maintain in order to please their employers. In Ann Petry's The Street, Lutie Johnson works so long as a live-in maid away from her home that eventually her marriage falls apart.

Perhaps the most insidious effect on a woman's spirit is shown by Pauline in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye. Pauline, recently moved to the north, is increasingly aware of the differences between her life and the idealized images she has seen in movies about the lives of white people. When she has to go back to work after the birth of her second child, she feels lucky to work as a maid in the home of a wealthy white family.

> She became what is known as an ideal servant, for such a role filled practically all of her needs. When she bathed the little Fisher girl, it was in a porcelain tub with silvery taps running infinite quantities of hot, clear water. She dried her in fluffy white towels and put her in cuddly night clothes. Then she brushed the yellow hair, enjoying the roll and slip of it between her fingers. No zinc tub, no buckets of stove-heated water, no flaky, stiff grayish towels washed in a kitchen sink...Soon she stopped trying to keep her own house. The things she could afford to buy did not last, had no beauty or style, and were absorbed by the dingy storefront. More and more she neglected her house, her children, her man...The creditors and service people who humiliated her when she went to them on her own behalf respected her, were even intimidated by her, when she spoke for the Fishers. She refused beef slightly dark or with edges not properly trimmed. The slightly reeking fish that she accepted for her own family she would all but throw in the fish man's face if he sent it to the Fisher house. Power, praise, and luxury were hers in this household. 45

DISCUSSION:

What circumstances led to Pauline's ideals about power and luxury? Think of a movie that influenced your ideas of luxury, and made you say, "I want to live like that." Would it be possible to obtain luxuries for yourself without sacrificing other persons' material and psychological well-being, or your own ethics or peace of mind?

It is also true, of course, that a significant number of relationships survived and flourished. In Jubilee, Vyry and her second husband Innis struggle through the obstacles placed in their way in the Reconstruction South. Vyry talks about the value of commitment through all this.

> Innis and me has got a marriage...We had been through everything together, birth and death,

flood and fire, sickness and trouble. And he ain't never thought once about hisself first, he always thought about us. 46

Sexual Exploitation

Southerners found themselves with a large labor force of slaves who had a distinct and different culture and who by 1800 outnumbered them. To control so large a group, Southerners used a variety of terrorist tactics rationalized by their belief in white superiority. According to this "code," Blacks were less than human and it was thus the right of whites to own, work and control them. One Southern politician claimed it was "not oppressive tyrannical supremacy" but was "compassionate, God-like supremacy exercised for the good of our nation, the happiness of the human race and the civilization of the world."[47] Another, in 1907, cloaked the doctrine of white supremacy in divinity when he said, "He who doubts that the Negro was created a servant to his brethren, doubts the Word of God."[48]

With this mythology, whites felt free to use brutal repression to keep African-Americans down during slavery and for many years after. One form this terror took was the sexual exploitation of the African-American woman by white men. Considered property, the female slave often was forced to make herself sexually available to the white male owner. Black women had scars to show the severity of their resistance.[49] Sometimes the scars went deeper than torn skin -- sometimes the scar was a broken will as in the case of Patsey:

> Patsey was slim and straight...There was an air of loftiness in her movement, that neither labor, nor weariness, nor punishment could destroy...She was a skillful teamster. She turned as true a furrow as the best, and at splitting rails there were none that could excel her... Such lightning-like motion was in her fingers... that in cotton picking time, Patsey was queen of the field...
>
> Naturally, she was a joyous creature, a laughing, lighthearted girl, rejoicing in the mere sense of existence. Yet Patsey wept oftener,

> and suffered more, than any of her companions... Her back bore the scars of a thousand stripes... because it had fallen her lot to be the slave of a licentious master and a jealous mistress...If she uttered a word in opposition to her master's will, the lash was resorted to at once, to bring her to subjection; if she was not watchful while about her cabin, or when walking in the yard, a billet of wood, or a broken bottle perhaps, hurled from her mistress' hand, would smite her unexpectedly in the face...Patsey had no comfort of her life...
>
> (Finally, for a trifling offense, Patsey was given a savage whipping, while her mistress and the master's children watched with obvious satisfaction. She almost died.)
>
> From that time forward she was not what she had been...The bounding vigor, the sprightly... spirit of her youth was gone...She became more silent than she was, toiling all day in our midst, not uttering a word. A care-worn, pitiful expression settled on her face...If ever there was a broken heart -- it was Patsey's.[50]

Single women slaves who worked in the house were particularly vulnerable to the advances of white males. These women were sometimes forced to pay with their bodies for better conditions for themselves and their families.[51] Married Black women and men were able to prevent this sexual abuse more successfully than single women.

Ironically, many white men who began by forcing themselves on slave women ended by loving them and the children they bore. This they could not readily admit for fear of the censure of their peers.[52]

After slavery, rape continued to be used as a form of repression against the African-American community. Again, as during slavery, Black men were prevented from seeking retribution for the raping of their women. The intent here was to weaken the will of Blacks and thus prevent their resistance to oppression in general. In "The Married Life of Georgia Peons," the man is so in debt to his white boss that he looks the other way when the boss takes his wife and has two children by her. In fact, this Black man compares his wife's life to those women "who fared about as bad as the helpless Negro men."[53]

Rape as a political act of terror is recorded as a recurring practice during the many race riots and individual terrorist raids of groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, a secret order of white men, dedicated to the maintenance of white supremacy. The whites participating in the riots and "night rides" of the Klan often went unpunished, while African-American women and men who attempted to protect themselves had little or no access to the law.

The sexual exploitation of Black women was also supported by the absurd racist assumption that somehow it was permissable to take advantage of African-American women because their morals were loose. For example, William Thomas, a mulatto who had absorbed the prevailing stereotypes, wrote the following about Black women:

> Females' aim in life is to be free of parental control, to secure idle maintenance and to indulge in unbridled sexual freedom...Fully ninety percent of them are lascivious by instinct and bondage to physical nature. 54

This writer also stated that in Black homes what passed as "family life was hardly more than unbridled and unabashed sexual promiscuity."

Willie Morris, writing of growing up white in the Mississippi Delta, shows how he had internalized the notion that only Black women were eager for sex:

> (Until I was 12) I had thought that only Negro women engaged in the act of love with white men just for fun, because they were the only ones with the animal desire to submit that way. So that Negro girls and women were a source of constant excitement and sexual feeling for me... 55

DISCUSSION:

The following is a quote from Judge Archie Simonson who, in Wisconsin in May, 1977, decreed that a 15-year-

> *old boy who had raped a girl in a high school stairwell should be permitted to stay at home under court supervision rather than be placed in a rehabilitation center.*
>
> *Judge Simonson said that the boy was only "reacting normally to prevalent sexual permissiveness and women's provocative clothing." The judge mentioned newspaper advertisement, prostitution arrests, sex stories, bars with nude dancing and young women who appear in public wearing revealing clothing as the cause of the attack.* 56

Can students cite accounts they have heard that show how members of society can be socialized to accept the stereotype of "loose women" who somehow invited being raped?

African-American men, as well as women, were considered by some to have deficient standards of sexuality. During the years of jimcrow, one prevalent notion was that every Black man was a potential rapist of white women. Quotes from Southern white men in the jimcrow years show that they felt their women were in a "state of siege" and in constant danger from Black rapists. White men "guarded the South's greatest treasure, her priceless jewel of beautiful, splendid, and spotless (white) womanhood."[57] (The ideal white woman was decorative, delicate, pure and sexually frigid, a myth just as unrealistic as that of the morally loose Black woman.)

The irrational fear that Black males were so lustful that when the "discipline of slavery was removed, the Negro was aroused and stimulated by their uncontrollable passion for white women" was used as the rationale for the killing, often by lynching, of Blacks in the South. More than 2,500 lynchings were recorded in the last 16 years of the 19th century. From 1900 to the outbreak of World War I in 1917, the toll was 1,100. Black women were also lynched.

Although Congress gave the President power to crush the Ku Klux Klan in 1871, its membership and activities grew, and between 1915 and 1920, the Klan's activities extended into the North. Thus, organized terrorism based on the racist myths of the sexual depravity of African-Americans became the means of enforcing jimcrow laws and the continued jimcrow denial of Blacks' economic and political rights.

Ideals of Beauty and Womanhood

> *TEACHER'S NOTE: Relate the information that follows to the background on African concepts of beauty (pp. 81-82) in the Overview of Women in Africa).*
>
> *It is important for students to understand that norms for what is considered beautiful vary between cultures and even within cultures over time. The standards of beauty to which we are all socialized become particularly detrimental to one's self-image when what is considered attractive in one culture is disparaged by another.*
>
> *You might start the section by taking a class poll to see what the students consider to be beautiful in women and men. Students could write their answers individually and then compare them. We found that no class came to a consensus as to what the ideal for beauty for either sex is. Students tended to develop a sense of the diversity of opinions and standards.*
>
> *You may want to use the activities on stereotyping that are described in the Overview on Chinese-American Women, Continuity and Change.*
>
> *Information on beauty is sensitive and difficult to present. Do not present this section on ideals of beauty if you feel uncomfortable with it.*

African physical features did not conform to what Caucasians in the United States perceived as beautiful. This situation brought about severe blows to Black women's self-esteem. Starting in slavery, those slaves who were less African in appearance (usually the mulattas, women of mixed blood) were given more privileges. In some parts of the South, a mulatta was taken from her mother and raised in the owner's house (see Margaret Walker's Jubilee). Often mulattas were sold as concubines or prostitutes. In "A Mother Is Sold Away From Her Children," the child, Emily, who is "of light complexion, and with a face of admirable beauty," is sold because "there are heaps and piles of money to be made of her when she is a few years older. There are men enough in New Orleans who would give five thousand dollars for such an extra handsome, fancy piece as Emily would be."[59]

The first novels published by African-Americans in which a Black woman is a beautiful heroine are about mulattas. They are Clothelle by William Wells Brown, and Iola Leroy by

Frances Harper. Both were written, ironically, by abolitionists who wrote this kind of novel in order to appeal to the sentiments of white society.

The mulatta, light-skinned and with some Caucasian features, came to be seen by both Blacks and whites in southern society as the beautiful woman of the Black community. When this standard became accepted by many Blacks, it was used by them to deprecate themselves.

This situation continued beyond the time of slavery. In The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison shows us the esteem Maureen Peal's "beauty" gave her.

> This disrupter of seasons was a new girl in school named Maureen Peal. A high-yellow dream child with long brown hair braided into two lynch ropes that hung down her back...She enchanted the entire school. When teachers called on her, they smiled encouragingly. Black boys didn't trip her in the halls; white boys didn't stone her, white girls didn't suck their teeth when she was assigned to be their work partner; Black girls stepped aside when she wanted to use the sink in the girls' toilet, and their eyes genuflected under sliding lids. 60

Later, when Maureen Peal yells at her three would-be friends, "I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly!" we see the effect of this not only on them but on Maureen as she becomes hated and friendless. At the same time, the three darker young girls are not able to deny her statement that they are "black and ugly"; they had learned from years of being told that big white dolls were "the special gifts" and of hearing the "honey" voices of parents and peers when they dealt with persons like Maureen Peal.

The impact of such damaging perceptions is described here by Reena in Reena by Paule Marshall.

> We live surrounded by white images, and white in this world is synonymous with the good, light, beauty, success, so that, despite ourselves sometimes we run after that whiteness and deny

> our darkness, which has been made into the symbol of all that is evil and inferior. ...Like nearly every little Black girl, I had my share of dreams of waking up to find myself with long blond curls, blue eyes and skin like milk. 61

During jimcrow years, some African-Americans became wealthy selling products which would lighten skin and straighten hair.

> *COMPARISON: Similar beauty products were introduced into Africa during Colonialism.*

In part, then, racism operated by using sexist techniques; that is, by attacking men's and women's sexual identities both in terms of standards of physical beauty and in terms of the performance of their sex roles. For example, as we have already seen, in being denied the roles of protector and provider of their families, Black men were robbed of their masculine roles (as they are traditionally defined). Black women were either described as oversexed ("loose Black women") or denigrated for being supposedly masculine in appearance.

Of the limited powers available to women in the restricted years of slavery and jimcrow, personal power, except within their own communities, was the most difficult to achieve. Looking back, many African-Americans today see that the cruel psychological damage inflicted on their ancestors was even greater than the brutal physical abuse.

The white woman was also caught in a trap. The ideal of femininity for her, whether she was upper class or poor, was to be delicate, pale and gracious. Few white women came close to reaching this ideal. Survival for many white women, particularly those who were poor, involved hard work and a stubborn will. Delicacy was impractical.

The upper class woman, too, did not have an especially easy or sanguine lot. Since she had a "privileged" status, she was expected to silently accept her place, sometimes knowing that her husband shared or gave all his affections to other women. A plantation mistress revealed her feelings about this situation in her diary:

> God forgive us, but ours is a monstrous system... Like the patriarchs of old, our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines; and the mulattoes one sees in every family partly resemble the white children. Any lady is ready to tell you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household but her own. Those, she seems to think drop from the clouds. 62

From the 1800's on, with more Americans becoming prosperous, the view in the dominant society was that the ideal woman should be a "lady" in the sense that she was to be unfailingly graceful, submissive and delicate.[63] Sojourner Truth, a Black woman who spoke powerfully for human rights, attacks the concept that women were not feminine unless they were "ladies."

> The man over there says women need to be helped in carriages and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages or over puddles, or gives me the best place -- and ain't I a woman? Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me -- and ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man -- when I could get it -- and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most of 'em sold into slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me -- and ain't I a woman? 64

DISCUSSION:

Have students notice that on television commercials women who work in the home or outside it rarely look as if they work very hard. Usually they are unfatigued, well-dressed, very "feminine" looking. Could commercials be realistic and still sell products?

Are there types of jobs, or looks, or clothes students feel are "feminine" and "masculine"?

Are any of these ideals worth challenging? What would be the psychological costs of doing so?

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Margaret Sloan is an activist and lecturer in the Black Feminist Movement. In the following piece, "The Saturday Morning Nap-Conversion," she recalls the pangs of growing up at a time when Black was not yet perceived as beautiful:

How could you ever really believe you were beautiful, sister? Do you remember all those painful Saturdays you spent in the little storefront beauty shop sometimes waiting three or four hours cause Mrs. Jones had scheduled two or three other people at the same time and of course she had to "squeeze in" the woman who had to get her head done to speak at her church supper that night, and you sat there rather anxious reading *Seventeen* and *Ingenue* and wondered in passing how come you didn't have "good" hair and the smoke from the burning hair and the hot grease would rival any neighborhood rib joint finally she called you and as you sat there with your head in braids under the dryer (Mrs. Jones said it dried quicker that way) you looked at the nine or ten other women at their various stages on the road to beauty and all the chatter and conversation came together somehow because this was the only place in the neighborhood that Black women could Talk and not be uptight about The Man or their men and hell yes you know that Ruby would never leave Al but she sure as hell had us convinced she was going to every week and Mrs. Jones gave you the mirror and you gave her the three-fifty you had rolled up in your hand all this time and you emerged with hot-dog bangs or Shirley Temple black curls and you walked home carrying that proudness tight inside you tighter than a Mary Jane stuck in your cavity and the new holes in your ears tasted the round gold rings that had just replaced the tiny broom straws and the few places that Mrs. Jones accidentally burned you with that hot comb didn't hurt so bad now cause your head wasn't nappy no more at least for about two weeks or until it rained but for right now your head was looking good and you saw Bobby Lee coming toward you and you just knew he would notice cause last time he saw you your head was nappy but now your ends were straight and you quick wiped the grease from the edges of your forehead and flashed a big grin at that handsome dude and he half smiled and said hey what's happenin' and went right on past you tried to hide your hurt feelings by skipping home cause running wouldn't be cool and you stopped at Mr. Johnny's and got you a greasy 10¢ no 25¢ bag of potato chips and told him to pour lots of hot sauce on it you were hungry now he surely must have noticed your head maybe he was just being cool you walked upstairs and no one was home checked the mirror once or twice hoping the reflection wouldn't catch you and you turned on the set and there was Maureen O'Hara in "Sentimental Journey" and you saw all that long hair hanging down and how that man took that white woman and ran his fingers through her hair she lay sick in that bed with all that long hair on that pillow and you wondered if Bobby Lee had seen that woman too she sure was pretty and you caught yourself again in that mirror trying to shake your hair back and it's two weeks later and naps don't shake anyway and you walked back to the beauty shop with a newspaper in case it's still raining when you get out you weren't gonna go but your momma had said this morning before she left for work girl get your hair done cause it really looks bad you hope you don't see Bobby Lee until after you get out and maybe this time he'll notice cause you gonna get a permanent. 65

Students, males and females, could write a short essay on any experience they've had "on the road to beauty," or, on a time when they worked at being beautiful only to have no one notice them.

Compare this essay with Song of Lawino by Okot p'Bitek in Women in Africa: Continuity and Change, pp. 172-173.

- *Why did Lawino resist "cooking her hair" to make it look like the white woman's? (Because of her conscious effort to retain the cultural differences between herself and the white woman.)*
- *Do you think the American girl had a real choice about "converting" her hair?*
- *What were the socializing influences on her to change her hair? (Magazines, peers, her mother's opinions.)*

POLITICAL POWER

Focus Questions:

- *In what actions did women have the most political power?*
- *In what actions did women have the least political power?*
- *What was the nature of women's political power? That is, what could they accomplish?*

African-American women had no legal political power in the years of slavery and jimcrow. Yet, many women did behave politically by resisting oppression. Their resistance took these forms: (1) revolt; (2) minor acts of sabotage; and, (3) work in organizations dedicated to change.

While a fair amount has been written in history books about the resistance of the Black man, very little has been written about Black women's struggle. Just as both sexes labored together and were punished with equal severity, so did they take part equally in resistance to oppression.

Revolts: More than 250 slave revolts occurred in the colonies and later in the United States; 100 revolts took place between 1800 and 1860.[66]

African-American women participated in open insurgency during slavery; this was particularly true in communities of Blacks who were fugitives. In the reports whites made of successful attacks against these communities, the existence of armed and fighting women was noted.[67] Accounts of slave rebellions and demonstrations in the North and the South describe women participants.

Women took part, too, in helping to plot rebellions, in arson and in murdering slave masters. Those women who were caught were punished as severely as were men. In fact, it appears that women were at times given harsher penalties. There are reports of women being burned alive for the same offense for which men were hanged. Sometimes a pregnant woman was allowed to give birth, and then was killed.[68]

Subtle Sabotage by Women: The vast majority of women and men participated in more subtle forms of resistance. Slaves might do their work poorly, damage crops, be constantly sick or act sullen. Pretense and cunning flattery were other subtle modes of fighting back.

Slave mothers were adept at finding ways to thwart the system in order to feed their children. Margaret Walker in _Jubilee_ writes of how the heroine's devoted Aunt Sally would

> ...steal great panfuls of white folks' grub, and how many pockets she had in her skirts and her bosom where she hid biscuits and cakes and pie ... Once safe in the cabin they would fill their stomachs full of good food, tittering over the thought of how many different kinds of fits the Big Mistress would have if she knew how she had been outsmarted. 69

In jimcrow years, protest took a more direct form as women reacted to discrimination. When Sojourner Truth found that conductors simply ignored a new law that allowed Blacks and whites to travel together in Washington D.C. trolleys, she would stand near the trolley and yell, "I want to ride! I want to ride! I WANT TO RIDE!" As people, carriages, horses came to a standstill, she would jump on the trolley before it could escape her.[70] Charlotte Hawkins in later years went further than this and sued the train company every time she was insulted or made to sit in a jimcrow car. In a letter to the Pullman Company, she wrote:

> I feel so intently the insults that are heaped upon me by the Railroad Co. that I am willing to become a martyr for Negro womanhood... and give up my chance of holding as friends people who would withdraw because of my attitude. 71

Accounts from the period of slavery also tell of secret schools for children set up by Black women. After slavery, women like Mary McLeod Bethune worked with extreme dedication to organize decent schools for rural Black children who were denied access to white schools. Bethune recalled a time in Florida when another need -- adequate hospitals for Blacks -- came to her attention.

> A student became critically ill with appendicitis, so I went to a local hospital and begged a white physician to take her in and

> operate. My pleas were so desperate he finally agreed. A few days after the operation, I visited my pupil.
>
> When I appeared at the front door of the hospital, the nurse ordered me around the back way. I thrust her aside -- and found my little girl segregated in a corner of the porch behind the kitchen. Even my toes clenched with rage.
>
> That decided me. I called on three of my faithful friends, asking them to buy a little cottage behind our school as a hospital. They agreed, and we started with two beds.
>
> From this humble start grew a fully equipped twenty-bed hospital -- our college infirmary and a refuge for the needy throughout the state. 72

These are dramatic acts of resistance made by outstanding women. Yet, these efforts were equalled by the resistance and survival tactics of all African-American women as they fought oppression daily.

Women's Groups Organized for Change: Perhaps the most powerful political impact African-American women have had is due to their participation in groups which pressure for political change. Black women have long been involved in social and political movements. Even in those years when it was highly dangerous to do so, significant numbers of women worked together against slavery, lynching, segregation and economic exclusion.

> *COMPARISON: Recall African women's political involvement through their clubs and organizations -- the African "sisterhood."*

The Abolitionists: The first organized political involvement of Black women was their work with the Abolitionists (persons working for the abolition of slavery). After 1800, criticism of slavery, led by the Abolitionists, increased in the North and in parts of Europe. By the 1840's, there were roughly as many women as men organized into

Abolitionist groups. Northern white feminists were involved, too, and were eager to unite women's rights with the anti-slavery question. Black and white women worked together on these issues, and were often confronted with hostile crowds.

> *COMPARISON: White women also had very limited rights in this period. They could not vote, had no legal rights over any property they inherited or over their own earnings, nor could they sue or be sued. Women could not go to college. Single women could not live alone without being considered morally suspect. Mothers had no custody rights over their children. It was natural, then, for Black and white women to work together on anti-slavery and women's rights issues.*

The Abolitionists not only spoke against the institution of slavery but also actively participated in increasingly dangerous attempts to help the slaves escape. One well-known escape method was the Underground Railroad -- slaves were hidden by friends as they made their way to freedom from the border states to the far north. Northern African-Americans made up a significant part of the Abolitionist movement as did great numbers of freed people in southern cities and in the border states. Untold numbers of these early Black freedom fighters were women.

Three of these women have become well known. One is Harriet Tubman. Born a slave in Maryland, Harriet Tubman is famous for being the most daring "conductor" on the Underground Railroad. During a ten-year period, Harriet Tubman made 19 trips into slave territory and rescued over 300 slaves, losing not one "passenger." Carrying a pistol with her at all times, she was known to point it at exhausted individuals who wanted to stop their flight and declare, "You go on or die." During the Civil War, Harriet Tubman was chief of the Southern branch of the Intelligence Service for the Union. She worked as a spy and a nurse, and led troops into battle. She also was a compelling orator in the

Abolitionists' meetings and, in later years, in the women's suffrage conventions.

Sojourner Truth, who was mentioned earlier, was another remarkable woman. Born a slave in New York in the last years of the 18th century, she saw all of her 12 brothers and sisters sold off. She suffered beatings, rape, and a forced marriage under slavery. In her middle years, she became one of the strongest speakers in support of the women's rights and anti-slavery movements. Her shrewd wit and fearlessness made her a symbol of Black females' resistance to inhumanity and discrimination. Once, when she was debating a lawyer, her opponent attacked her by saying, "You think your talk does any good, old woman? Why, I don't care any more for it than a fleabite." "Maybe not," replied Sojourner, "but the Lord willing, I'll keep you scratching."[73]

Frances Watkins Harper was another exceptional Abolitionist and feminist. She was also a writer at a time when Black women writers were extremely rare. Her Iola Leroy is the first published novel by an African-American woman. Born of free parents, Frances Harper was orphaned when she was young and was self-supporting by age 13. Lecturing and writing eventually became her means of support. Having a special interest in the needs of African-American women, she spent most of her time before and after the Civil War talking and working with them. Here is an excerpt from one of her poems:

The Slave Mother

She is my mother, pale with fear,
   Her boy clings to her side,
And in her kirtle vainly tries
   His trembling form to hide.

He is not hers, although she bore
   For him a mother's pains;
He is not hers, although her blood
   Is coursing through his veins!

He is not hers, for cruel hands
   May rudely tear apart
The only wreath of household love
   That binds her breaking heart. [74]

Women's Anti-Lynching Crusades: After their emancipation, African-American women early saw how terrorism continued to be used to keep their race in place. As in slavery, some women dedicated their efforts to stop such injustices. Now, they focused their energies on an intense crusade against lynching. One such crusader was Ida Wells Barnett (1862-1930) who was born to slave parents. She contended that lynching was done for political and economic motives, since often the men who were lynched were economically successful. She was half-owner of the newspaper Memphis Free Press and lectured and wrote in Britain as well as in America. In reaction to her investigations, Ida Barnett's offices were destroyed; she had to flee from Memphis in fear of her life.

Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954), a leading Black suffragist and club woman, also became an activist in the anti-lynching crusade. Citing the cause of lynching as "race hatred, the hatred of a stronger people toward a weaker one who were once held as slaves," Mary Terrell called upon the consciences of white women:

> It is too much to expect, perhaps, that the children of women who for generations looked upon the hardships and the degradation of their sisters of a darker hue with few if any protests, should have mercy and compassion upon the children of that oppressed race now. But what a tremendous influence for law and order and what a mighty foe to mob violence Southern white women might be, if they would arise in the purity and power of their womanhood to implore their fathers, husbands and sons no longer to stain their hands with the Black man's blood! ... 75

Through the investigations of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, formed in 1910), lynchings finally became a national issue and woman's groups rallied to support this effort. In the 1930's and 1940's, some southern white women finally joined Black women in speaking out against lynching and mob violence.

Black Women's Clubs: Even as they struggled to earn a living and educate their own children, African-American women realized that only by joining with each other could they struggle successfully against discrimination. Black women's clubs carried on resistance work during the period of jimcrow, and in 1896 the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) was formed as a unifying force behind all the women's groups. From then on, grassroots clubs proliferated rapidly. These women were active social reformers who had a significant impact on aspects of urban life. Unlike white club women, many Black club women were working women, tenant farmers or poor people. The motivating sentiments of almost all these clubs were race pride, defense against discrimination, and material advancement.[76]

COMPARISON: Note the nature and power of women's clubs and organizations in modern Africa.

Early Black Feminists: A substantial number of African-American women were as eager as white women to achieve women's rights, including suffrage. Sojourner Truth, speaking in 1867 when she was 80, said, "I am glad to see that men are getting their rights, but I want women to get theirs, and while the water is stirring I will step into the pool."[77]

The movements for the abolition of slavery and for the rights of women had been closely linked, yet when the Abolitionists had to get Black suffrage legislation passed after the Civil War, they were unwilling to include the more unpopular issue of female suffrage! Feminists were deeply disappointed and some white feminists and Abolitionists came to a parting of the ways. But most Black women agreed with Frances Harper, a well-known champion of women's rights, when she said, "When it is a question of race (I) let the lesser question of sex go."[78]

This is not to say that Black feminists forsook their belief that the needs of Black women were different and distinct from those of Black men. Women who later became involved in politics and in trade unions spoke against the discrimination leveled against them on the basis of their sex as well as their race. Some women, too, spoke out angrily against Black men who they felt were not supportive. Amy Garvey wrote these biting words in 1925:

> We are tired of hearing Negro men say, "There is a better day coming," while they do nothing to usher in the day. We are becoming so impatient that we are getting in the front ranks ...Black men are less appreciative of their women than white men...and yet who is more deserving of admiration than the Black woman? 79

Dr. Pauli Murray, author, professor and political organizer, noted the problems for African-American women in these years, while pointing up the unique powers these women have exhibited in their struggles:

> Negro women, historically, have carried the dual burden of Jim Crow and Jane Crow. They have not always carried it graciously, but they have carried it effectively. The have shared with their men a partnership in a pioneer life on spiritual and psychological frontiers not inhabited by any other group in the United States. For Negroes have had to hack their way through the wilderness of racism produced by the accumulated growth of nearly four centuries of a barbarous international slave trade, two centuries of chattel slavery and a century of illusive citizenship in a desperate attempt to make a place of dignity for themselves and their children.
>
> In this bitter struggle, into which has been poured most of the resources and much of the genius of successive generations of American Negroes, these women have often carried disproportionate burdens in the Negro family as they strove to keep its integrity intact against the constant onslaught of indignities to which it was subjected. Not only have they stood shoulder to shoulder with Negro men in every phase of the battle, but they have also continued to stand when their men were destroyed by it. Who among us is not familiar

with that heroic, if formidable, figure exhorting her children to overcome every disappointment, humiliation and obstacle. This woman's lullaby was very often "Be something!" "Be somebody!" 80

DISCUSSION:

Compare the conditions of Black women's lives in America during slavery with those of women's lives in old China. (No legal or political rights; selling of children; sexual exploitation; powerlessness; little choice in marriage; menial work.)

Did white women suffer any oppressions similar to those of Black women in slavery and jimcrow? To compare the situations of Black and white women, read and discuss the poem A Black Woman Speaks by Beah Richards.

Compare the roles of African-American women in jimcrow years with those of women in traditional rural Africa. (Africa: hard work; little choice in marriage; strong mother-child bonds; clear sex-role divisions in work and marriage; African sisterhood. Jimcrow years: hard work; male/female relationships weakened; less security; more equality in marriage; economic self-sufficiency in a society where women weren't supposed to be independent; cultural clash over feminine physical beauty standards and behaviors; American sisterhood.)

Notes

[1] Eugene Genovese, Roll, Jordan, roll: the world the slaves made (New York: Pantheon, 1974), p. 87.

[2] Susie Taylor, Reminiscences of my life in camp (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968), p. 18.

[3] Gerda Lerner, ed., Black women in white America: a documentary history (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 94.

[4] Lewis Lockheed, Mary S. Peake, The colored teacher at Fortress Monroe (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), pp. 34-35.

[5] Lerner, Op. cit., p. 93.

[6] Jawn Sandifer, ed., The Afro-American in U.S. history (New York: Globe Book Company, 1969), p. 215.

[7] Lerner, Op. cit., p. 16.

[8] Ibid., p. 20.

[9] Gerda Lerner, The woman in American history (Menlo Park, Ca.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1971).

[10] Genovese, Op. cit., pp. 343-348.

[11] Lerner, Black women in white America, p. 35.

[12] Beth Millstein and Jeanne Bodin, We, the American women: a documentary history (New York: Jerome S. Ozer, 1977), p. 25.

[13] Margaret Walker, Jubilee (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), p. 50.

[14] Hofstadter and Miller, The United States (4th edition) (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 334-335.

[15] Alice Walker, *The third life of Grange Copeland* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1970), pp. 58-59.

[16] Hofstadter and Miller, *Op. cit.*, p. 524.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 384.

[18] Lerner, *Black women in white America*, p. 230.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 321.

[20] Louise Meriwether, *Daddy was a number runner* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 207.

[21] Gerda Lerner, *The female experience: an American documentary* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1977), pp. 290-292.

[22] Millstein and Bodin, *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

[23] Billie Holiday, *Lady sings the blues* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1956), p. 40.

[24] John Clarke, ed., *Harlem: voices from the soul of Black America* (New York: Signet Books, 1970), p. xi.

[25] Gwendolyn Brooks, *Report from part one* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1973), p. 153.

[26] Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," *Ms.*, 2:11 (May 1974), pp. 70, 105.

[27] Lerner, *Black women in white America*, pp. 45-46.

[28] Lai Jen, "Oppression and Survival" in *Asian women* (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), p. 24.

[29] Genovese, *Op. cit.*, p. 499.

[30] Robert Staples, *The Black woman in America: sex, marriage and the family* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1973), p. 134.

[31] Carol Stack, *All our kin* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

[32] Josephine Carson, Silent voices (New York: Delacorte Press, 1969), p. 8.

[33] Alex Haley, The autobiography of Malcolm X (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 19.

[34] Meriwether, Op. cit., p. 191.

[35] Pat Robinson and Group, "A Historical and Critical Essay for Black Women in the Cities, June 1969," in Toni Cade, ed., The Black woman (New York: New American Library, 1970), p. 207.

[36] Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," The Black Scholar (December 1971), p. 13.

[37] Robinson, Op. cit., p. 208.

[38] Genovese, Op. cit., p. 500.

[39] Lerner, Black women in white America, pp. 8-9.

[40] Meriwether, Op. cit., p. 76.

[41] Alice Walker, The third life of Grange Copeland, p. 55.

[42] Ibid., p. 5.

[43] Ibid., p. 177.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Toni Morrison, The bluest eye (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), pp. 100-101.

[46] Margaret Walker, Op. cit., pp. 408-409.

[47] I.A. Newby, Jim Crow's defense: anti-Negro thought in America, 1900-1930 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), p. 141.

[48] Ibid., p. 83.

[49] Juanita Browne, The Black Woman, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 1974, p. 12.

[50] Lerner, *Black women in white America*, pp. 50-51.

[51] Davis, *Op*. *cit*., pp. 12-13.

[52] Genovese, *Op*. *cit*., p. 415.

[53] Lerner, *Black women in white America*, p. 154.

[54] Newby, *Op*. *cit*., p. 137.

[55] Genovese, *Op*. *cit*., p. 428.

[56] *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 1977, p. 1.

[57] Newby, *Op*. *cit*., p. 137.

[58] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Digest* (Spring 1974), p. 14.

[59] Lerner, *Black women in white America*, p. 12.

[60] Morrison, *Op*. *cit*., pp. 52-53.

[61] Paule Marshall, "Reena," in Watkins and David, eds., *To be a Black woman* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1970), p. 257.

[62] Mary Chesnut, *A diary from Dixie*, Ben Williams, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961).

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[65] Margaret Sloan, "The Saturday Morning Nap-Conversation," *Ms* 1:1 (July 1972), pp. 72-73.

[66] Davis, *Op*. *cit*., p. 10.

[67] *Ibid*.

[68] Sandifer, *Op*. *cit*., p. 113.

[69] Margaret Walker, *Op*. *cit*., pp. 35-36.

[70] Lerner, *Black women in white America*, p. 373.

[71] *Ibid*., p. 376.

[72] *Ibid*., p. 142.

[73] Lerner, *The woman in American history*, p. 77.

[74] William Robinson, *Early political women poets* (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown, Co., 1969), p. 31.

[75] Lerner, *Black women in white America*, pp. 209-210.

[76] *Ibid*., p. 437.

[77] *Ibid*., p. 570.

[78] *Ibid*., p. 245.

[79] *Ibid*., p. 579.

[80] *Ibid*., pp. 592-593.

Student Learning Materials

Slavery

First-hand accounts

Brent, Linda (Harriet Jacobs). *Incidents in the life of a slave girl*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973. 210 pp. Paper. $3.45.

Gerda Lerner cites this as among the most interesting of the women's slavery narratives. Written ten years after Harriet Jacobs (the author's real name) escaped -- at age 27, in 1845 -- this book gives us the whole sweep of the trials of slavery. Harriet relates the years of persecution by her "unprincipled master and jealous mistress," her seven years of hiding in a hole on her master's property, and her eventual escape north and consequent fear when the Fugitive Slave Laws were enacted in New York.

Her account deals particularly with the special plight of women in slavery. Harriet was a mulatta who was coveted by her master, leaving her to wish that she could live as a "drudge" doing field work rather than in the "big house." She feels also the grief of all slave mothers whose children are owned by others.

In Harriet and her relatives there is, however, a real sense of resistance to their slave condition. She rails at her master and plots her escape. Her grandmother -- strong, steady and the rock of the family -- also intervenes with the master and establishes herself as a person with some status in the white community.

Individual chapters could be assigned for shorter selections.

David, Jay and Greene, Catherine, eds. *Black roots: an anthology*. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1971. 224pp. Hardcover. Out-of-print.

Twenty Black Americans recall their childhood. The selections are short and easy to read. Women stressed equally with men. Some selections written by men are included as suggested readings because they discuss the women, usually the mother, in their lives.

- Draper, Joanna. "From *Lay my burden down*" (pp. 23-28).
  Joanna Draper was born in 1854 and recalls growing up as a slave in Mississippi. At the age of eight she was taken from her parents and sold. Her master never told her when slavery was later abolished.
- Walker, Thomas. "From *The honey-pod tree*" (pp. 31-37).
  A slave mother and father live on different plantations and are separated after the Civil War.

This is a tender account of a father's search for his wife and child. It speaks to the myth that men were not involved with their families in slavery.

Lerner, Gerda, ed. Black women in white America. New York: Vintage Books, 1973. 630pp. Paper. $3.95.

A large and important collection of sources in a largely ignored area of history. The editor's preface, the notes on sources, the bibliographic notes and the commentary which runs throughout provide a valuable framework and guide to further study.

- Grandy, Moses. "Moses Grandy's wife is sold" (pp. 8-9). Poignant incident which shows the destruction of the slave family.
- "A mother is sold away from her children" (pp. 10-12). A well-cared-for mother and child are separated in a sad, bitter scene. Child is light-skinned and the new owner hopes that "heaps of money" will be made on her when she is older.
- Jacobs, Harriet. "A house slave's family life" (pp. 17-18). Destruction of slave family. Picture of hardships of house slaves which contradicts idea that house slaves had special privileges. (Compare with "Lilac Chen, 84," in Nee and Nee, Longtime Californ', pp. 83-90).
- Harrison, Martha. "I wasn't crying 'bout mistress, I was crying 'cause the white bread was gone" (pp. 22-25). Hard life of slaves, their physical abuse and their family life. A young girl subtly resists work.
- Taylor, Susie. "Sneaking an education: memories of a contraband" (pp. 27-29). Shows ways a young girl learns to read illegally.
- "Foolin' massa: memories of a contraband" (pp. 29-30). Ways slaves learned to read and played dumb to ascertain what was happening in their master's world.
- "A slave mother in business" (pp. 33-34). When her husband was sold away, this slave mother was allowed to work for herself. She became successful and the poor whites around her became jealous.
- "Fight, and if you can't fight, kick" (pp. 34-40). A feisty female slave, whose owners are rather afraid of her, lives on a small farm where the master and his family live in close contact with slaves.
- "The slave-holder's mistress" (pp. 50-51). A vital, joyous slave girl becomes careworn as she is beaten into submission.

Watkins, Mel and David, Jay, eds. To be a Black woman: portraits in fact and fiction. New York: Wm. Morrow and Co., Inc., 1970. 279pp. Hardcover. $6.95.

"An anthology of selections from historical and literary works. Depicts the lives of Black women in a white world, their self-images, and their relationships to Black and white men. Emphasizes the degrading aspects...accepts the Black matriarchy theory, and accuses Black women of castrating Black men. Very disappointing...." (Common Women Collective, Women in U.S. history, p. 28.)

A large variety of selections which could be used in all historical periods. Use only selections with women protagonists -- no essays. Some selections reinforce image of Black women as emasculating.

- "Jenny Proctor" (pp. 13-20). Autobiographical account which describes violence toward slaves. After emancipation, Jenny becomes a sharecropper.

Biographies

Pauli, Hertha. Her name was Sojourner Truth. New York: Avon Books, 1976. 245pp. Paper. $1.50.

The first 50 pages describe Sojourner's years in slavery in New York. The spirit and fight of this woman, who was to become one of the most magnetic voices for the rights of her race and sex, emanate from this section.

A large part of the middle section describes at length Sojourner's involvement with "Father" Matthias and his religious commune. Later chapters are more appropriate.

Beginning with "Is God dead?" (p. 174), they depict her speeches and work with Frederick Douglass, her association with the early suffragists, and her meeting with President Lincoln.

Petry, Ann. Harriet Tubman: conductor on the underground railroad. New York: Archway Paperbacks, 1971. 227pp. Paper. $0.75.

This is a moving, easy to read book. It would be appropriate for students to read the entire book.

There is a substantial portion devoted to Tubman's childhood as a plantation slave. The heavy outdoor work she did was valuable in later years, as she built up her strength and learned how to survive in the woods.

Harriet's marriage to John Tubman and later decision to leave him, when he would not allow her to seek her freedom, is discussed. Her many rescue missions are also told in interesting detail.

Novels

Gaines, Ernest J. The autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. New York: Bantam Books, 1971. 246pp. Paper. $1.50.

"This novel purports to be the autobiography of a hundred-year-old Black woman as told to a young Black sociologist. It tells of her escape as a young girl from slavery, her long trek northward, her marriage, her eventual 'conversion' to Christianity -- events not recorded in the history books. Gaines makes Miss Jane so real, so alive, that many readers have accepted it as genuine autobiography. In any case, it is as much history as fiction." (Rosenfelt, ed., p. 29.)

An appropriate selection for the whole African-American unit.

Pp. 3-15. In these first pages, the Union soldiers come to Jane's plantation and the slaves are freed. Glimpses of the life of the slave, brutality, cotton production.

Walker, Margaret. Jubilee. New York: Bantam Books, 1975. 410pp. Paper. $1.50.

"The life of Vyry, born a slave on a Georgia plantation, is the focus of this Civil War novel. She is a Dilcey-esque character whose primary virtues are endurance, patience, quiet strength. The book documents the same historic events we all know from Gone with the wind, but the perspective, of course, is utterly different, a reminder that what the wind has taken is not glamor but a system of brutal exploitation. The events of Reconstruction are perhaps the most interesting of all, because less familiar: the struggles of freed slaves to create a life for themselves in an unremittingly hostile world." (Rosenfelt, ed., p. 34.)

An important book that could be read for both the Jim Crow years and slavery.

- "Sis Hetta's child" (pp. 1-14).
  A short selection on slavery.
- "Sis Hetta's child, the ante-bellum years" (pp. 1-144).
  This whole section is on slavery.

Ms. Walker finished this epic novel 100 years from the day her great-grandmother was set free from slavery. This is her story, as told to the author by her own grandmother. A fictionalized account, it is lively reading.

Vyry, a mulatta and her master's 15th slave child, is brought to the "big house" where she is trained to cook. Hated by the master's wife, Vyry is tormented and comes to see her color as a "badge of shame." She bears two children by a free Black man, but can never secure her own freedom. The section ends with Vyry refusing to escape without her children and consequently getting caught and beaten when they slow her down.

Dominant themes are of motherhood, of Vyry's plight as a mulatta, and of the use of terror to subdue women. Portrays the daily lives of the slaves through the changing seasons and contrasts the lives of rich and poor white women.

Jimcrow

First-hand accounts

Carson, Josephine. Silent voices: the southern Negro woman today. New York: Delacorte, 1969. 273pp. Hardcover. $6.95.

Interviews with a variety of Black southern women from maid to community organizer, from poor to middle class. Rosenfelt, in Strong women, calls this a "superbly written account...Carson allows them to speak in their own voices...but she has structured their accounts with a novelist's art." (p. 10).

- "The south" (pp. 7-12).
  Describes the life of maids in a southern town.

David, Jay and Greene, Catherine, eds. Black roots: an anthology. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1971. 224pp. Hardcover. Out-of-print.

Twenty Black Americans recall their childhood. The selections are short and easy to read. Women stressed equally with men. Some selections written by men are included as suggested readings because they discuss the women, usually the mother, in their lives.

The south:

- Horne, Lena. "From In person - Lena Horne" (pp. 63-67).
  Lena Horne writes about her mother, an aspiring actress who had to work at menial jobs. Lena, too, is trained for the stage.
- Moody, Anne. "From Coming of age in Mississippi" (pp. 69-74).
  Anne Moody was born into a family of Mississippi sharecroppers in 1940. She describes the hard work done by her mother and also her own awakening to racial prejudice.
- Angelou, Maya. "From I know why the caged bird sings" (pp. 76-85).
  Maya Angelou spent her early years in Stamps, Arkansas, where she is awed by Mrs. Flowers, "the aristocrat of black Stamps." Maya is painfully aware that her mother's language isn't as refined as Mrs. Flowers'. But this refined woman is the first to recognize the skilled sewing of Maya's mother and explains that one should be "intolerant of ignorance, but understanding of illiteracy."

The city:

- Kitt, Eartha. "From Thursday's child" (pp. 128-136).
  Eartha Kitt tells of being sent in 1929 to New York City to live with her aunt. Her adjustments to the

city highlight the sharp contrast between it and the rural life of the poor in the South, in this case South Carolina.

The Midwest:

- Goodwin, Ruby. "From It's good to be black" (pp. 176-185).
  Ruby Goodwin describes her life in a small Illinois town where, in 1910, her family is excited by the Jim Jeffries (The Great White Hope) - Jack Johnson fight. One comes to understand why it was important for the Black community to have a hero at this time. Everyone is ecstatic when Johnson wins; "We are now a race of champions."
- Thompson, Era. "From American daughter" (pp. 187-194).
  Era Thompson grew up on a North Dakota farm in the 1920's. She vividly describes her family's struggle and how one year there was no money left for food. Surprisingly, a neighboring German immigrant farmer saves them from starvation.

Men/Mothers:

- X, Malcolm. "From The autobiography of Malcolm X" (pp. 196-210).
  A moving selection about his father's death, its effect on his mother, and the family going on welfare. This selection is also found in Watkins and Davis, eds., To be a black woman, annotated below.
- Gregory, Dick. "From Nigger: an autobiography" (pp. 211-244).
  "Like a lot of Negro kids, we never would have made it without our Momma." Dick Gregory describes his childhood of poverty and the compliant, smiling attitude his mother adopted in order to survive.

Lerner, Gerda, ed. Black women in white America: a documentary history. New York: Vintage Books, 1973. 630pp. Paper. $3.95.

A large and important collection of sources in a largely ignored area of history. The editor's preface, the notes on sources, the bibliographic notes and the commentary which runs throughout provide a valuable framework and guide to further study.

Terrorism:

- "Testimony of witnesses before the Joint Congressional Committee" (pp. 182-188).
  First-hand accounts of the treatment of African-American women by the KKK in 1871. Might be used to read aloud in class.

Resistance:
- Bethune, Mary. "A college on a garbage dump" (pp. 134-146).
  Her struggle to start a school asking for money from wealthy white people. Illustrates unequal education of Blacks in the south.
- Truth, Sojourner. "Fighting Jim Crow" (pp. 370-375).
  Sojourner Truth challenges conductors in an attempt to ride on a "white only" streetcar in Washington, D.C.

Childhood experiences of discrimination:
- Tuck, Sarah. "Blue Fork is the worst place I know" (pp. 302-305).
  Girl lives in poverty in a community where expectations are low. Deals with her concept of physical beauty.
- Bates, Daisy. "I did not really understand what it meant to be a Negro" (pp. 306-308).
  Young girl is discriminated against for the first time. Shows powerlessness and rage of father.
- "The small horrors of childhood" (pp. 376-378).
  Girl learns discrimination from her white playmates.

Work experiences:
- "I live a treadmill life" (pp. 227-229).
  Endless work as a "mammy" in the South. Restrictions on freedom.
- Rice, Florence. "It takes a while to realize that it is discrimination" (pp. 275-284).
  Present day work in northern cities; factory work, unionism.

Sexual exploitation:
- "Married life of the Georgia peons" (pp. 150-154).
  Life of Georgia sharecropper tied to the land, end of the 19th century. Wife used as mistress to white man in the "big house." Describes position of Black male.
- "We are little more than slaves" (pp. 155-158).
  Abuses of domestic workers by white men. Description of types of jobs. Concept of "bad" Black women.

Watkins, Mel and David, Jay, eds. To be a black woman: portraits in fact and fiction. New York: Wm. Morrow and Co., Inc., 1970. 279pp. Hardcover. $6.95.

"An anthology of selections from historical and literary works. Depicts the lives of black women in a white world, their self-images, and their relationships to black and white men. Emphasizes the degrading aspects...accepts the black matriarchy theory, and accuses black women of castrating black men. Very disappointing...." (Common Women Collective, Women in U.S. history, p. 28.)

A large variety of selections which could be used in all historical periods. Use only selections with women protagonists -- no essays. Some selections reinforce image of Black women as emasculating.

- "The autobiography of Malcolm X" (pp. 57-60). Effects of institutionalized racism on Malcolm X's mother as she attempts to keep her family together after his father's death. Depression years.
- Holiday, Billie. "Lady sings the blues" (pp. 115-126). Excerpt from her autobiography starts when she is 13 years old. Billie understands the limited options for Black women ("maid or whore"). Description of time spent in prison.

Fiction: selections

Clarke, John, comp. Harlem: voices from the soul of Black America. New York: Signet Books, 1970. 222pp. Paper. Out-of-print.

- West, Dorothy. "Jack in the pot" (pp. 53-66). Mrs. Edmunds finally wins $50 in a bingo game and then finds she can't spend it for fear the relief officials will think she secretly has a job.
  Story also shows the frustration of her husband ("he never got over being ashamed") when he cannot find work, and the hold the grocer has on welfare customers who "never get paid up." A similar situation to "Frankie Mae" in the south (see below).
- Petry, Ann. "In darkness and confusion" (pp. 66-98). Ann Petry is one of this period's best short story writers. In this piece, the life of Harlem poverty is seen from the perspective of a man, William Jones, who tried his best to raise a son in the ghetto, to find a decent living for his overworked wife, and "to get the words together" to persuade the school principal that his niece was not a "slow learner" and should finish high school. The niece, Annie May, and the wife, Pink, play dominant roles in the story as the threads of their individual frustrations erupt when William, mourning for his son, ignites a riot.
- Meriwether, Louise. "Daddy was a number runner" (pp. 198-211).
  Daddy's career as a numbers runner turns out to be unreliable, and it is clear that mother's work, supplemented by relief, is what will support the family. Twelve-year-old Francie's faith in her father ("I trusted Daddy, I wondered how come mother can't") is weakened, and the selection ends when she challenges Sukie to a fight she is bound to lose.

Washington, Mary, ed. Black-eyed Susans: classic stories by and about Black women. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1975. 163pp. Paper. $2.95.

The introduction (ix-xxxii) provides excellent interpretations of the selections, which are deliberately arranged to progress from a brutal and unnecessary tragedy to a story of hope and promise. Along the way, they illustrate the themes of growing up Black and female, the intimidation of color, the Black woman and the myth of the white woman, the Black mother-daughter conflict, and the Black woman and the disappointment of romantic love.

- Smith, Jean. "Frankie Mae" (pp. 1-18).
  Smart, active young girl loses her vitality as southern oppression breaks her father and herself.
- Morrison, Toni. "The coming of Maureen Peal" (pp. 23-36).
  Maureen Peal is pretty, "high yellow," and a favored child. Theme of physical beauty. From The bluest eye.

Watkins, Mel and David, Jay. eds. To be a Black woman: portraits in fact and fiction. New York: Wm. Morrow and Co., Inc., 1970. 279pp. Hardcover. $6.95.

"An anthology of selections from historical and literary works. Depicts the lives of Black women in a white world, their self-images, and their relationships to Black and white men. Emphasizes the degrading aspects...accepts the Black matriarchy theory, and accuses Black women of castrating Black men. Very disappointing...." (Common Women Collective, Women in U.S. history, p. 28).

A large variety of selections which could be used in all historical periods. Use only selections with women protagonists -- no essays. Some selections reinforce image of Black women as emasculating.

- Toomer, Jean. "Blood-burning moon" (p. 38-48).
  Clash between Black man and white in south over the love of a Black woman. Burden of responsibility for "inevitable" hanging of the Black male falls on the woman. Well written, but a sensitive subject.

Fiction: novels

Gaines, Ernest J. The autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. New York: Bantam Books, 1971. 246pp. Paper. $1.50.

"This novel purports to be the autobiography of a hundred-year-old Black woman as told to a young Black sociologist. It tells of her escape as a young girl from slavery, her long trek northward, her marriage, her eventual 'conversion' to Christianity -- events not recorded in the history books. Gaines makes Miss Jane so real, so alive, that many readers have accepted it as genuine autobiography. In any case, it is as much history as fiction." (Rosenfelt, ed., p. 29.)

An appropriate selection for the whole African-American unit.

- Pp. 15-196.

  Jane Pittman's wanderings in the unsettled Reconstruction South and her marriage to the horse trainer, Joe. Jane reveals the pain of Black-white interaction during this period and tells how it destroyed two men -- one white and unfortunate enough to fall in love with a Black woman and wanting to marry her, and one Black, her own Ned, whose outspoken beliefs in race pride led to his death.

Meriwether, Louise. Daddy was a number runner. New York: Pyramid Books, 1976. 208pp. Paper. $1.25.

Ghetto life of Harlem in the 1930's from a Black girl's viewpoint. At the heart of the book is her growing sense of being one of the ghetto's victims. The adults, too, feel increasingly helpless as they watch the dreams they had for their children fail to materialize. At the end, Francie sums it up: "We was all poor, Black and apt to stay that way." Easy to read.

Petry, Ann. The street. New York: Pyramid Books, 1969. 270pp. Paper. $0.95.

The first chapters show the destruction of Lutie Johnson's marriage when, as a maid in Connecticut, she must live away from home. Reveals also the attitudes of whites toward Black women as sexually loose.

Lutie struggles alone to provide for and protect herself and her son. Her continual sexual exploitation and her one chance to make money as an entertainer result in disaster and eventually lead her to violence. In a melodramatic ending, she flees New York without telling her true love -- her son.

Walker, Margaret. Jubilee. New York: Bantam Books, 1975. 410pp. Paper. $1.50.

"The life story of Vyry, born a slave on a Georgia plantation, is the focus of this Civil War novel. She is a Dilcey-esque character whose primary virtues are endurance, patience, quiet strength. The book documents the same historic events we all know from Gone with the wind, but the perspective, of course, is utterly different, a reminder that what the wind has taken is not glamour, but a system of brutal exploitation. The events of Reconstruction are perhaps the most interesting of all, because less familiar: the struggles of freed slaves to create a life for themselves in an unremittingly hostile world." (Rosenfelt, ed., p. 34.)

An important book that could be read for both the jimcrow years and slavery.

- Pp. 263-410. Or individual chapters.

Although Jubilee shows the famine and dislocation among whites as well as Blacks in the Reconstruction South, it also demonstrates the persistent efforts of whites to keep Blacks down. Only when Vyry shows her worth as a "granny" (midwife), is her family free from harassment and fear. While Vyry's importance in resisting oppression is one dominant theme, another is her commitment to her family. At the end, her husband calls her "the best true example of the motherhood of her race, an ever present assurance that nothing could destroy a people whose sons had come from her loins."

Mini-play

Billie Holiday. Relevant Instructional Materials. $2.00 from Social Studies School Service, 10,000 Culver Boulevard, Culver City, CA. 90230. Order #RIM 20.

Designed for junior high. This mini-play is easy material which would be good for students not motivated to read. Teacher strategy suggestions include ways to use the play as an illustration of the process of making choices. Script and activity sheet may be duplicated.

Overview of African-American Women: Continuity and Change

Carolyn Reese

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INFLUENCES BEHIND CHANGE

The idea that for every two steps forward there is a step backward seems particularly relevant when we look at the position of the African-American woman in modern times. By "modern times," we refer to roughly the past 20 years. There are many indications of a positive increase in her power. There are also many signs of the continuation of conditions which have sharply curtailed her power. The "double jeopardy" of racism and sexism still keeps her from reaching parity with many other groups. Rather than attempt to encompass the totality of the changes and continuities in the position and power of African-American women in recent years, we will highlight some major events or trends, and then provide examples that show how these events affected the power of women.

The liberation movements of the 1950's, 60's and 70's had important influences on Black women in America. Three movements are of particular significance -- the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, and the Black Feminist Movement. All are part of a long continuum of social and political protest by Blacks. These recent movements have touched the lives of great numbers of people and have been more closely aligned than earlier movements with the liberation struggles of Third World peoples around the globe. We see, too, a beginning alliance among Third World peoples within this country.

Concepts to Define:

"the system"
boycott
integration
welfare
militant
middle-class
Affirmative Action
Third World people

The Civil Rights Movement:

> "We can't let what happened yesterday stop us
> today." --- Jane Pittman

By the mid-1950's, jimcrow laws began to meet serious challenges. The Civil Rights Movement, made up of a coalition of Blacks and whites, challenged major aspects of racial oppression, including racial segregation in schools and obstacles to the exercise of voting rights. The Movement had the support of the federal government; often the courts moved to rule jimcrow laws unconstitutional, and the weight of the federal justice system acted to enforce the new rulings. The Civil Rights Movement was an intense, grass roots effort to complete the legal and social reforms that African-Americans had been trying to obtain since slavery. It often used dramatic non-violent means of protest. Peaceful demonstration, boycotts, sit-ins, voter registration campaigns were the non-violent tools. The Movement helped unify the African-American community and give it increased political power and momentum for change.

The Black Power Movement:

> "I'm a revolutionist...if such a thing can be.
> I was trained to be in power." --- Nikki Giovanni

The premise behind Black Power is that African-Americans should control their own communities politically, economically and socially.

African-Americans in the North and South seriously questioned the value of non-violence as a means of change, and expressed increasing dissatisfaction with the goals of integration. While intense battles for racial equality were being fought with limited success in the South (and blood was being shed because of the violence of the opposition to the demonstrations), little had happened in the North to end discrimination in housing, employment and education. Black sharecroppers and farm laborers had gone to northern cities in record numbers in the 1950's and 1960's, and many whites had reacted to this by fleeing to the suburbs, leaving the urban Black communities even more isolated than before. Unemployment, bad housing and hunger had become central issues.

Faced with unending white hostility, and disillusioned with the government's efforts to effect change, the concept of "Black Power" grew while the old Black-white political coalitions broke down. It seemed white people were irrelevant to a Black struggle that had essentially become a demand for self-determination and for the development of a truly Black identity.[1]

Black Feminism:

> "No developing nation, whether it be Black colonies of the U.S. or an independent nation ...can afford the luxury of keeping its women in bondage." --- Joyce Ladner

Black women stress the differences between their needs and those of women from white cultures. Thus, within the women's movement, Blacks have developed a feminist position which is unique and which is more relevant to other Third World women.

Few Black women can relate to a program that seems white middle-class in character and that deals primarily with the oppression of sexism. African-American women must always deal with racial oppression as well. Facing this reality, Black feminists redefine feminism to deal with the priorities which relate to the lives of most Black women. In listing some of these priorities, Michele Russell states:

> ...On every social policy question facing the Women's Movement, Black women have to deal with the most brutalizing aspects of it.
>
> If the issue is rape, we are much more likely to deal with rape by policemen and prison guards. Where white middle class women express their concern over population patterns in terms of support for legalized abortion and zero population growth, Black women's attention centers on opposing forced sterilization. While the consumer movement develops "proper labelling" campaigns for foods and pharmaceutical products,

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Black women have to develop strategies to deal with starvation, not nutrition. We have to be concerned with heroin prevention and methadone maintenance, not with which is the best of ten brands of aspirin.

When it comes to issues like child development, for Blacks that means fighting the social Darwinism of Schockley, Jensen's theories of genetics and the use of Ridillin to pacify children labelled hyperactive in schools. 2

POLITICAL POWER

Focus Questions:

Has there been a change in society's political expectations of African-American women?

Is there a change in the nature of African-American women's political participation?

Do African-American women participate equally with African-American men in political life?

Identify:

- *influences on the amount and nature of women's current political participation;*
- *spheres where African-American women's political power has not increased;*
- *spheres where African-American women have more political power than previously.*

African-American women have continued in their political role as resisters to white oppression. In the process, new feelings of power have developed and new ways to project and protect that power have been found.

> *COMPARISON: Third World leaders in this country are usually people who led the resistance against the imposition of white culture on Third World people; similarly, African leaders are often those who led the struggle against white domination of African political life.*

Black Women in Civil Rights Struggle: In the years of the Civil Rights struggle, African-American women aligned themselves with the Movement every step of the way. The following account describes the trials of a young high school girl, Elizabeth Eckford, who became involved in the Movement because she wanted to integrate an all-white high school in the South. Her efforts to enter the school were shown on television and film throughout the world. Her courage and dignity became a call to action to others who soon joined the struggle.

In 1954, Thurgood Marshall won a unanimous decision in Brown et al. v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. This ruling stated that segregated schools were inherently unequal and unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment. The ruling in effect overruled the Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) decision that established the "separate but equal" principle used to justify Southern racial segregation.

In 1955, all states were ordered by the federal government to abolish school segregation "with all deliberate speed." Although a few large southern cities complied with this decision, most Southern whites, and many Northern whites as well, resisted. As Blacks tried to enter "white only" schools, ugly violence surfaced in place after place. This was the case in 1957 in Little Rock, Arkansas, where nine African-American students tried to enter all-white Central High School.

When it was first learned that Little Rock was required to integrate its high school, Elizabeth Eckford, 15-years-old and strong-willed, was eager to attend. In fact, her first major battle with her family was over the issue of going to Central. A month before school was to open, Elizabeth told her mother she wanted to attend Central; her mother kept putting her off, hoping she would forget about it. Near the end of August, Elizabeth became more determined, and announced to her mother, "We're going to the school board office and we're going today." They went, got a transfer and she was admitted.

Excited about getting ready for her new school, Elizabeth did not hear the television report the night before that told of a large crowd gathering at the school and of Governor Faubus of Arkansas surrounding the school with troops. (He claimed he had heard that caravans of cars filled with white supremacists were heading toward Little Rock and that "blood will run in the streets" if Black students attempted to enter Central High School.) Nor did any of the leaders from the Black community reach Elizabeth in time to keep her home. Thus, she was the only Black student of the nine enrolled who showed up to go to school. Here is her account:

> Then I caught the bus and got off a block from the school. I saw a large crowd of people standing across the street from the soldiers guarding Central. As I walked on, the crowd suddenly got very quiet. Superintendent Blossom had told us to enter by the front door. I looked at all the people and thought, "Maybe I will be safer if I walk down the block to the front entrance behind the guards."

At the corner I tried to pass through the long line of guards around the school so as to enter the grounds behind them. One of the guards pointed across the street. So I pointed in the same direction and asked whether he meant for me to cross the street and walk down. He nodded "yes." So I walked across the street conscious of the crowd that stood there, but they moved away from me.

For a moment all I could hear was the shuffling of their feet. Then someone shouted, "Here she comes, get ready!" I moved away from the crowd on the sidewalk and into the street. If the mob came at me I could then cross back over so the guards would protect me.

The crowd moved in closer and then began to follow me, calling me names. I still wasn't afraid. Just a little bit nervous. Then my knees started to shake all of a sudden and I wondered whether I could make it to the center entrance a block away. It was the longest block I ever walked in my entire life.

Even so, I still wasn't too scared because all the time I kept thinking that the guards would protect me.

When I got right in front of the school, I went up to a guard again. But this time he just looked straight ahead and didn't move to let me pass him. I didn't know what to do. Then I looked and saw that the path leading to the front entrance was a little further ahead. So I walked until I was right in front of the path to the front door.

I stood looking at the school -- it looked so big! Just then the guards let some white students go through.

The crowd was quiet. I guess they were waiting to see what was going to happen. When I was able to steady my knees, I walked up to the guard who had let the white students in. He too didn't move. When I tried to squeeze past him, he raised his bayonet and then the other guards closed in and they raised their bayonets.

They glared at me with a mean look and I was very frightened and didn't know what to do. I turned around and the crowd came toward me.

They moved closer and closer. Somebody started yelling,"Lynch her! Lynch her!"

I tried to see a friendly face somewhere in the mob -- someone who maybe would help. I looked into the face of an old woman and it seemed a kind face, but when I looked at her again, she spat on me.

> They came closer, shouting, "No nigger bitch is going to get in our school. Get out of here!"
>
> I turned back to the guards but their faces told me I wouldn't get help from them. Then I looked down the block and saw a bench at a bus stop. I thought, "If I can only get there I will be safe." I don't know why the bench seemed a safe place to me, but I started walking toward it. I tried to close my mind to what they were shouting, and kept saying to myself, "If I can only make it to the bench I will be safe."
>
> When I finally got there, I don't think I could have gone another step. I sat down and the mob crowded up and began shouting all over again. Someone hollered, "Drag her over to this! Let's take care of the nigger." Just then a white man sat down beside me, put his arm around me and patted my shoulder. He raised my chin and said, "Don't let them see you cry."
>
> Then, a white lady -- she was very nice -- she came over to me on the bench. She spoke to me but I don't remember now what she said. She put me on the bus and sat next to me. She asked my name and tried to talk to me but I don't think I answered. I can't remember much about the bus ride, but the next thing I remember I was standing in front of the School for the Blind, where Mother works.
>
> I thought, "Maybe she isn't here. But she has to be here!" So I ran upstairs, and I think some teachers tried to talk to me, but I kept running until I reached Mother's classroom.
>
> Mother was standing at the window with her head bowed, but she must have sensed I was there because she turned around. She looked as if she had been crying, and I wanted to tell her I was all right. But I couldn't speak. She put her arms around me and I cried. 3

Elizabeth and the other African-American students got into the school only after President Eisenhower sent federal troops to ensure their safety. There they were often harassed by the other students. Integration at Central High was short lived; in the fall of 1958, Governor Faubus ordered the school closed. Elizabeth received her high school degree through a correspondence course with the University of Arkansas. Piles of letters from throughout the world were sent to Elizabeth as she and the other students became symbols of the civil rights struggle.

DISCUSSION:

What influenced Elizabeth to feel that she could enter the previously all-white Central High?

What would you have done in Elizabeth's place?

Would this experience have crushed your desire to go to Central High or have made you even more determined to go?

To see more clearly how the movement took shape, let us look at the action of Rosa Parks. Rosa Parks lived in Montgomery, Alabama where bus drivers had the right to order Blacks to sit at the back of the bus. One day in 1955, Rosa Parks, tired after a hard day's work, refused to give up her seat and move to the back of the bus. Her arrest for this refusal started a massive protest and boycott by the Black community of all the city buses. The boycott was led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

All 50,000 African-Americans in the city walked or carpooled for almost three months. In retaliation, the city invoked a law stating that boycotting was a crime. Dr. King and a hundred other leaders were arrested, and the homes of Dr. King and the Reverend Ralph Abernathy were bombed.

African-Americans appealed to the courts and in 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that jimcrow seating rules in buses were unconstitutional. The magnitude and success of the boycott showed Blacks that through unified effort they could win. Yet, of equal value was the impact on African-Americans of the spontaneous and heroic act of Rosa Parks which had sparked the protest.

The character of Jane Pittman, in Ernest Gaines' novel, The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, recalls Rosa Parks' act. When Jane's youthful protege and freedom fighter, Jimmy, wants to take a stand against the segregated drinking fountains of Sansome, Louisiana, Jane says:

> "What Miss Rosa Parks did, everybody wanted to do. They just needed one person to do it first because they all couldn't do it at the same time; then they needed King to show them what to do next. But King couldn't do a thing before Miss Rosa Parks refused to give that white man her seat." 4

Later, when the boy with Jimmy says, "We have our Miss Rosa Parks," it is clear that Jane is the one who will confront the jimcrow law in Sansome and drink from the "white only" fountain.

> *TEACHER'S NOTE: Recall a similar protest in 1865 by Sojourner Truth who insisted on riding in an all-white trolley car. Have students grasp the significance of the fact that because the climate of the civil rights era was ripe for action, the results of Rosa Parks' act were more far-reaching than Sojourner Truth's act.*

By the 1960's, civil rights protests had exploded throughout the entire society. Mass demonstrations, sit-ins, boycotts, and other forms of resistance produced arrests and violence against thousands of persons. About 70,000 people had participated in civil rights demonstrations by 1963.[5] Some lost their lives for the movement.

One profound effect on many Black women who participated in these struggles was a heightened sense of power.[6] Dorothy Bolden from Atlanta, Georgia expressed such sentiments when she wrote about the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.:

> The tone of the man's voice did something to you. It electrified the inner spirit of you. It awakened the belief you had within. You had to really move...And when he had a march here, I marched. I'll never forget that day. I think it was a Sunday morning and it was cold that day. I fed my children corn flakes for breakfast and I told them to stay and don't open the door for nobody. And I went demonstrating and it really gave me great pride and dignity to do so. 7

In her novel of this period, Meridian, Alice Walker describes the power of her heroine, Meridian, which emanates from fearlessness and commitment rather than from might:

> At other times her dedication to her promise came back strongly. She needed only to see a starving child or attempt to register to vote a grown person who could neither read nor write. On those occasions such was her rage that she actually felt as if the rich and racist of the world should stand in fear of her, because she -- though apparently weak and penniless, a little crazy and without power -- was yet of a resolute and relatively fearless character, which, sufficient in its calm acceptance of its own purpose, could bring the mightiest country to its knees. 8

Anne Moody, retelling her years as a civil rights worker, writes of a similar sense of commitment.

> That summer I could feel myself beginning to change. For the first time I began to think something would be done about whites killing, beating and misusing Negroes. I knew I was going to be a part of whatever happened. 9

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Have students recall one of their readings from slavery and jimcrow years (e.g., "Frankie Mae") and compare it to the previous three quotes. Often in these earlier readings, a woman's expression of rage would be followed by a sense of defeat, not commitment.

Though racism was not conquered in these years, what ultimately was achieved was an awareness that citizens could cause political and social changes in the system. Alice Walker affirms this when she says:

> Yes, I believe in change: change personal, and change in society. I have experienced a revolution (unfinished, without question, but one whose new order is everywhere on view) in the South. 10

Black Women Elected to Office: One outcome of this new feeling of power to effect change was an even greater commitment on the part of some Black women to work for change. As one path to this goal, women organized to solve community problems. African-American women had long assumed community leadership roles; this approach represents a continuity in the form which Black women's political power took. But now there was some limited government support for their efforts. For example, President Johnson's Poverty Program to train, educate and employ low-income people gave a number of women increased opportunities to become elected to office and to manage community projects.

The autobiography, Ossie, shows how one woman took a first step toward controlling her environment by getting anti-poverty money to start a teenage recreation center. Previously, Ossie had felt powerless.

African-American women also have begun to be elected to positions of political power outside their communities. Shirley Chisholm's attempt to secure the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972 is dramatically portrayed in the film Chisholm: Pursuing the Dream. The film shows the enormous emotional and financial sacrifices Chisholm made to introduce issues crucial to minorities and women in this country. In her autobiography Unbought and Unbossed, Chisholm points out that she had been for years a strong "behind the scenes" ward politician until she finally decided in 1964 to run for political office herself. Tapping the political support of the Black club and church women in Harlem, Chisholm succeeded in getting elected. Her determination to confront the sexism of the political structure is revealed in the following statement:

> For my part, I was not interested in listening to any reasons why I shouldn't run. By then I had spent about ten years in ward politics and had done everything else but run for office... The other people who got elected were men, of

> course, because that was the way it was in politics. This had to change someday, and I was resolved that it was going to start changing right then. I was the best-qualified nominee, and I was not going to be denied because of my sex. 11

Later, when Shirley Chisholm ran for the presidency of the United States, she emphasized that as a woman and as a Black she was especially aware of major problems in this country: "I feel very deeply -- I've seen sorrow, poverty... most politicians don't care."[12] Chisholm felt that it was important to show people that a Black woman was serious about running for high office. Her feelings are based on a sense that Black women have always contributed to American society politically and are now in a position to do so in state and national political office.

Women as Leaders for Black Power: With the move toward more militancy by such organizations as SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, formed in 1960 by a group of Southern Black college students), with the growing links between the struggle against racism and the war in Vietnam, and with the emergence of militant Black organizations like the Black Panther Party, women found themselves with new decisions to make and new ways to express themselves politically. The poet and writer Nikki Giovanni in 1968 wrote of her ideological change:

> The whole damn thing is Bertha's fault. Bertha was my roommate and a very Black person, to put it mildly. She's a revolutionary. I don't want to spend needless time discussing Bertha but it's sort of important. Before I met her I was Ayn Rand - Barry Goldwater all the way. Bertha kept saying, how could Black people be so conservative? What have they got to conserve? And after a while (realizing that I had absolutely nothing, period) I came around. So I got an Afro and began the conference beat and did all those Black things that we were supposed to do. 13

For Meridian, in Alice Walker's novel Meridian, the decisions to be faced were harsh:

> And Meridian had sat among them on the floor, her hands clasping the insides of her sneakers, her head down. To join this group she must make a declaration of her willingness to die for the Revolution, which she had done. She must also answer the question "Will you kill for the Revolution?" with a positive Yes. This, however, her tongue could not manage...
>
> This group might or might not do something revolutionary. It was after all a group of students, of intellectuals, converted to a belief in violence only after witnessing the extreme violence, against black dissidents, of the federal government and police. Would they rob a bank? Bomb a landmark? Blow up a police station? Would they ever be face to face with the enemy, guns drawn? Perhaps. Perhaps not. "But that isn't the point!" the small voice screeched. The point was, she could not think lightly of shedding blood. And the question of killing did not impress her as rhetorical at all. 14

The Black Power Movement produced some militant women leaders. Angela Davis, calling herself a "Black revolutionary woman," spoke in 1971 about her assessment of the role of Black women in the Movement:

> ...no revolutionary should fail to understand the underlying significance of the dictum that the success or failure of a revolution can almost always be gauged by the degree to which the status of women is altered in a radical, progressive direction...For there is no question about the fact that as a group, Black women constitute the most oppressed sector of society. 15

COMPARISON: The belief that the position of women must be upgraded as a necessary step in the "liberation" of the whole society has been appreciated by (1) modern African leaders such as Sekou Toure (Guinea) and (2) The People's Republic of China.

Perhaps the most profound effect the Black Power Movement had on women was on their sense of personal power. The following paragraph, written by Nikki Giovanni in 1969, could not have been written by her grandmother, or even her mother. Clearly, it is the statement of a woman whose own sense of worth has been reaffirmed by the Black Power Movement:

> Base experiences affect people; before they are born, events happen that shape their lives. My family on my grandmother's side are fighters. My family on my father's side are survivors. I'm a revolutionist...if such a thing can be. I was trained to be in power -- that is, to learn and act upon necessary emotions which will grant me more control over my life. Sometimes it's a painful thing to make decisions based on our training, but if we are properly trained we do. I consider this a good. My life is not all it will be. There is a real possibility that I can be the first person in my family to be free. That would make me happy. I'm twenty-five years old. A revolutionary poet. I love. 16

DISCUSSION:

What does Ms. Giovanni mean when she says "before they are born, events (experiences) happen that shape (people's) lives?"

Discuss Nikki Giovanni's definition of power -- "to learn and act upon necessary emotions which will grant me more control over my life." Relate this to one incident in your life.

TEACHER'S NOTE: 1) Nikki Giovanni mentions that her grandmother's side are fighters. In her book Gemini, she presents one humorous incident in the life of this "fighter" grandmother that the class might enjoy hearing read aloud (pp. 24-33). 2) Ms. Giovanni feels she is "free" -- perhaps because she is able to take control of her life; e.g., she chooses to write, tries to choose relationships which nurture her. The class might discuss what they think Ms. Giovanni means when she says she was "trained to be in power."

Black Feminism: African-American women have not readily aligned themselves with the concept of feminism. Sojourner

Truth's words in 1853, "I suppose I am about the only colored woman that goes about to speak for the rights of colored women,"[17] are echoed in 1976 by a 12-year-old girl in Ossining, New York: "My mother and I are probably the only Black feminists in town."[18]

As both sexes relate to the new political thrusts for power, Black women have at times chosen to suppress the leadership of Black men rather than assume leadership in their own right. What might be the reasons for this tendency? Historically, Black men were not allowed to deal with the white, male power structure to the extent that Black women were. Black women had more access to the dominant culture because they lived and worked in white houses, and were possibly not as feared by whites as were Black men. Some African-American women feel that because of this past pattern it is important for men to now assume leadership positions in greater numbers. The Civil Rights Movement noticeably reflected this approach in that women more often functioned as supporters than leaders. Ella Baker, a veteran of five decades of work in the freedom movement, challenges this situation:

> There are those...who have said to me that if I had not been a woman I would have been well known in certain places, and perhaps held certain kinds of positions.... I knew from the beginning that as a woman, an older woman, in a group of ministers who are accustomed to having women largely as supporters, there was no place for me to have come into a leadership role.... The movement of the 50's and 60's was carried largely by women.... It was sort of second nature to women to play a supportive role.... I think that certainly the young people who are challenging this ought to be challenging it, and it ought to be changed. 19

The Black Power Movement, however, asked for an even more self-effacing role for women. Charles Thomas, first chairperson of the Association of Black Psychologists, states the feeling this way: "As a Black man I feel that my family, my wife, my children must sacrifice everything for me...my family realizes that if I don't make it, they won't make it either."[20] Not all men in the Black Power Movement call for a "behind the scenes" role for women, however. Black Panther leader Bobby Seale reflects another viewpoint:

> In the Panther household everyone sweeps the floor, everybody makes the bed, and everybody makes a revolution, because real manhood depends on the subjugation of no one. 21

It becomes clear then that African-American women have had to deal with pressures on them to redefine their roles vis-à-vis role changes in men. In the homework readings, students will discover that individuals resolve this situation in different ways. Some women will agree with an assessment like Nikki Giovanni's:

> I don't really think it's bad to be used by someone you love. As Verta Mae pointed out, "What does it mean to walk five paces behind him?" If he needs it to know he's leading, then do it -- or stop saying he isn't leading. Because it's clear that no one can outrun us.... I used to think why don't they just run ahead of us? But obviously we are moving pretty fast. 22

Other women oppose this view. They feel that with this approach issues of particular concern to women tend to get ignored. In an analysis of the Civil Rights Movement, Eudora Pettigrew, professor at Michigan State University and an outspoken Black feminist, says:

> This tradition of Black women as menials and victims is one which the civil rights movement has failed to explicitly and forcefully combat. The Black man grapples to achieve social justice and parity with the white male...while Black women are shoved to the "back of the bus." 23

In the statement of purpose of the new National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), this goal is articulated:

> Because we live in a patriarchy, we have allowed a premium to be put on Black male suffering. No one of us would minimize the pain or hardship or the cruel and inhumane treatment experienced by the Black man. But history, past or present, rarely deals with the malicious abuse put upon the Black woman...We, not white men or Black men, must define our own self-image as Black women... 24

Of issues such as adequate child care or equal pay, African-American women join white women in confronting the political system; in other concerns, they are creating their own, more pertinent priorities. While defining feminism for itself, the Black Feminist Movement has begun to unify Black women who historically have been divided because of class or color. For example, light-skinned African-Americans, who in the past have formed an elite group and excluded darker women from churches, colleges, clubs and supervisory positions, are being asked by feminists to seek their commonality with all Black women. Ashaki Habiba Taha wrote her reaction to a Black woman's conference where she saw division over class and color lines lessening:

> The beautiful thing about it was that we were able to see each other as Black women. Period. Not as Southern Black women, or professional Black women, or welfare mothers, or household workers, or college students or middle-class Black women or poor Black women or light- or dark-skinned Black women or gay or straight Black women. We were able to do what white feminists have failed to do: transcend class lines and eradicate labels. 25

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Read "The Woman Who Changed the South" by Eleanor Holmes Norton, which appeared in Ms., July, 1977. Then react to the discussion questions that follow.

In 1971, Fannie Lou Hamer, Democratic political leader and organizer in Mississippi, described why she had thrown so much of her energies into politics:

We've (the Black women) had a special plight for 350 years. My grandmother had it. My grandmother was a slave. She died in 1960...and right now I work for the liberation of all people, 'cus when I liberate myself, I'm liberating all people...you know, people tells you, don't talk politics, but the air you breathe is polluted air, it's political polluted air. The air you breathe is politics. So you have to be involved. 26

Fannie Lou Hamer's involvement in politics came from a sense that as a woman with a "special job" she was now able to achieve her political aims. Not that this was easy. Born one of 20 children in a sharecropper family, she worked picking cotton and as a plantation timekeeper until 1962 when she lost her job for registering to vote. In 1963, she was jailed and severely beaten for attempting to integrate a restaurant. She was under constdnt attack because of her civil rights leadership; her home was bombed as recently as 1971.

In the spring of 1977, Fannie Lou Hamer died. The following eulogy to her was written by Eleanor Norton, head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Washington, D.C.

Fannie Lou Hamer is dead. When I first met her in 1963 in Winona, Mississippi, as a law student sent to fetch her from jail, I was sure she would live forever.

As it turns out, she will. She belongs to a tradition of freedom-seeking American heroines at the side of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Mary Bethune -- and of Jane Addams, Margaret Sanger, and Eleanor Roosevelt. She was one of the most inspiring souls to emerge from the civil rights movement of the 1960's. No one who heard her can doubt that, as a speaker with an awesome combination of focused intelligence and vision, she alone was in a class with Martin Luther King, Jr.

Fannie Lou Hamer never fully exploited her remarkable gifts. She shared them, but she shunned the social and economic mobility that almost inevitably came with civil rights fame. She died poor, in March of this year.

Most will remember Fannie Lou Hamer from the proceedings of the 1964 Democratic Party Convention at Atlantic City, where she electrified the nation with her testimony of the brutal exclusion of blacks from the Mississippi Democratic Party. The reforms that have since introduced minorities and women into the party structures of Republicans and Democrats alike derive directly from the urgent need for change that she communicated.

She was born into the most bitter poverty America had to offer. The youngest of 20 children, a child laborer in the cotton fields from the age of six, a sharecropper for 18 years, she understood her mission in the movement and her purpose in life. She never moved away from the Mississippi soil, but in 1962 she left the plantation when the owner gave her the choice of losing her home and livelihood as a sharecropper or withdrawing her voter registration. "I didn't try to register for you," she told him, "I tried to register for myself." And she left. Thus began her journey into the civil rights movement where she helped inspire the mood and action that transformed America in the 1960's.

She lived to see some of the changes she had worked so hard to bring about. She lived to understand that the value she had placed on the right to vote had not been too high. Without Fannie Lou Hamer and the militant nonviolent freedom movement of the 1960's, the developing South with its Sunbelt prosperity would have lacked the racial climate necessary to attract capital to this chronically underdeveloped region of the country. A tradition of white terrorism had to be overcome to produce such results. Fannie Lou Hamer -- defiant, brave, loving -- led the way, risking all she had, herself.

With only six years of schooling, she made her own way to universal principles of brotherhood; yes, and of sisterhood. She spoke at the founding meeting of the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971. She addressed the convention in support of the nomination of Sissy Farenthold for vice-president at the 1972 Democratic Convention. Fannie Lou Hamer knew the meaning of female subordination.

But this profoundly Black woman was of a world broader than her own race and sex. She reached out to the miserably poor whites in her native Sunflower County, organizing a cooperative farm to raise animals and vegetables. Hunger, it turned out, was the vital bond between the white and black poor. Last year, her hometown of Ruleville declared a "Fannie Lou Hamer Day." She lived to be vindicated and loved by these Mississippi whites whose hatred she had overcome.

I regret that after the 1960's more women and girls were not exposed to Fannie Lou Hamer. For she had a singular capacity to impart courage and to chase timidity. She was a mixture of strength, humor, love, and determined honesty. She did not know the meaning of self-pity. "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired," she would often say to knowing applause during her speeches. 27

DISCUSSION:

From what you now know about Fannie Lou Hamer, discuss the factors which influenced her political involvement. (Civil Rights Movement; Women's Movement; sense of special purpose as a Black woman; conditions of poor in South, tradition of women like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman.)

Using this article as well as other information you may have located, discuss ways Fannie Lou Hamer brought about change. (Reforms in selection process of political parties; "sit-ins" in restaurants; voter registration work; improved racial climate in South which attracted business to region; support of women candidates; organization of cooperative to raise food for poor.)

What are some similarities between the political involvement of Sojourner Truth and Fannie Lou Hamer? (Traveled, giving dramatic speeches; alliances with women's groups; concern with poor; willingness to take risks; willingness to shun wealth.)

What would be major differences between the ways Fannie Lou Hamer and Sojourner Truth could influence change? (Fannie Lou Hamer could vote and work within the political structure, Civil Rights Movement reached more people than Abolitionist Movement.)

ECONOMIC POWER

Focus Questions:

Look at the effect of economic change on women's power to:

- *work in whatever occupations they want;*
- *earn a good wage in whatever work they do;*
- *have a say in how the goods they produce or money they earn is used;*
- *have their work valued.*

Identify:

- *spheres where the amount and content of women's economic power have not changed;*
- *spheres where women have more economic power than previously.*

Changes

Jobs Open During World Wars: In considering economic changes, we must first take into account the effect of World War I and World War II on the status of women in the work force. With the outbreak of each world war, the male labor force was reduced and the supply of immigrant labor was cut off. This resulted in changes in labor policies, opening new opportunities for African-Americans. During the world wars, industrial jobs were open to Black women for the first time. (The exception was the tobacco and cannery industries which had employed Black and Chinese-American women earlier.)

An example of this change from service jobs to work in industry is spelled out by Florence Rice, now active in tenant and consumer organizing. She describes the Bronx "slave market" in the 1930's: "We used to stand there and people would come and give you any kinds of work." In World War II, Florence Rice got work at Wright Aeronautical. Her experiences working during and after the war are typical of those of many Black women.

> They claim that people can't be trained, that you've got to go through seven, eight weeks of training, when during the war we trained in two weeks. I was an internal grinder...I think I was making anywhere from eighty-five, ninety-five dollars a week, which was utopia. I don't think I belonged to the union. There was a lot of Black people in the plant. One of the things, there was no Black personnel that I can remember. Our heads was white.
>
> At the end of the war we were turned out in the street. The factory didn't close at that time. The factory continued on. They laid us off. This is no more than I think mostly all of us expected. 28

After the war, Florence didn't want to go back to domestic service or to the laundry. Instead, she chose the garment industry. "At that time in the Black community the factory was much better than the laundry, like the laundry was better than domestic work."[29] Step by step, Florence Rice took better jobs as openings for Black women occurred.

This increase in job options illustrates a major change in the economic power of Black women. After the war, more and more Black women found their way into clerical jobs. Along with service jobs, clerical work remains the principal sphere in which African-American women are employed today.[30]

Because of non-discriminatory policies in employment and affirmative action educational opportunities, African-American women have finally been able to set their goals beyond domestic or semi-skilled factory work. And, in recent years, through the pressure of liberation movements on government and business a further breakdown of racial and sexual barriers has begun.

Alice Walker's Meridian provides an example of the effect these policies have had on women's job choices. Meridian notices how young Black women in the south in the late 1960's were "experimenting" with interesting new jobs:

> Black women were always imitating Harriet Tubman -- escaping to become something unheard of. Outrageous. One of her sister's friends had become, somehow, a sergeant in the army and knew everything there was to know about enemy installations and radio equipment. A couple of girls her brothers knew had gone away broke and come back, years later, as a doctor and a schoolteacher. But even in more conventional things, black women struck out for the unknown. They left home scared, poor black girls and came back (some of them) successful secretaries and typists (this had seemed amazing to everyone, that there would be firms in Atlanta and other large cities that would hire black secretaries). 31

COMPARISON: Recall women in modern Africa who migrate to cities for work. When they return, they impress everyone with their new skills and "city ways."

In an interview, Cicely Tyson, actress (star of the movie The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman), also describes the sense of escape to new work she experienced when she left her job as a Red Cross secretary to begin her life as a model.

> One day, completely overwhelmed by her tedious office work, she pushed herself away from the desk and announced: "I'm sure God didn't put me on this earth to bang on a typewriter!" After quitting her job, she enrolled in a modeling school and eventually earned $65 an hour. It was after an interview with a fashion editor for Ebony magazine that Cicely Tyson was "discovered" as an actress. 32

Black Women Join Unions: Another change occurred when African-American women were able to participate in unions.

At first African-Americans were totally excluded from the labor organizations which had become a vital instrument for change by the 1930's. Until 1935, most unions were in the American Federation of Labor (AFL). But since the AFL would not admit all workers, laws passed by the New Deal Congress encouraged the growth of new unions. In some of these unions, like the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), African-Americans found a vehicle through which they could work for better pay and economic security.

In the South and North, women joined unions for the first time, helping elect females to positions of authority, and challenging jimcrow attitudes within their unions. Luanna Cooper, steward in a local tobacco union composed mostly of Black women, commented about the recruiting attempts of a competing union: "They're trying to have jimcrow unions ...They wanted me to join. I told them: 'I get jimcrow free. I won't pay for that.'"[33]

COMPARISON: Other Third World women entered unions at this time as well.

Industries which mainly employ Black and other Third World women (e.g., hospital workers, domestic workers, garment workers) are considered among the most exploitive in the country; yet, there have been either no organizing attempts in these industries or the unions there have been led by biased men.

> *COMPARISON: Note the organizing efforts of Chinese-American women in the garment industry.*

The film, I Am Somebody, by Madeline Anderson, portrays the prolonged strike in 1969 by 400 African-American workers of the South Carolina Medical College, most of whom were women. The women wanted the right to form a union and obtain decent working conditions and equal pay. As one woman said: "Hospital workers are sick and tired of being sick and tired." With the hospital administration and governor of the state firmly against them, the striking hospital workers' plight became a national issue. Major civil rights leaders (Coretta King was filmed addressing the strikers), students and the local community marched in their support. Winning their demands after a 100-day strike, the strikers, through the film's narrator, talked about the effect of their united effort:

> We proved to everyone that we could stand and fight together. We learned unity through power. We learned that if you were ready to fight for yourself, people will fight with you. 34

> *DISCUSSION:*
>
> *Discuss the influence of the Civil Rights Movement on the attitudes of the women during the strike, i.e., "We learned unity through power." Would the women have gone on strike if the civil rights climate of the times had not been a reality?*

It has been difficult for women to get involved in union leadership to the same degree as men. Florence Rice speaks to the problem:

> Working women do not have the time to organize. They can't allow themselves to get involved in discussions. Because their first duty is to their families--and so therefore it gave them little time. 35

Dedicated African-American women are making inroads in fields ignored by organized labor, like domestic work. Carolyn Reed, a domestic worker who organizes for the Household Technicians of America, describes how she goes after new recruits. Given the isolating nature of domestic work, an organizer's task is difficult. As one technique, Reed slips past the doormen of elegant apartment buildings in New York:

> "The first rule of thumb is to get friendly with the doorman.... If you've got a real dumb doorman, you just walk right in." 36

She frequently buttonholes Black women at bus stops or in the fancy food shops of the East Side. "You can pick them out because you know that they're not shopping to have tea by themselves."[37] Reed's union work also takes her to the offices of New York State senators to pressure them to pass bills. Her union involvement is a strong example of Black women's willingness to confront the system in order to achieve economic parity.

Black Professional Women Increase in Numbers: Since African-American men were denied the opportunity to teach, or to enter most professions, families were sometimes more willing to help support their daughters through a university education than their sons.[38] African-American women were able to enter teaching and social work; both professions opened up to Black women in the 1930's. Unfortunately, teaching and social work became stereotyped fields of work for Black professional women, and for other women as well.

In *Reena*, Paule Marshall writes of a reunion she has with an old friend, Reena. Reena was an energetic journalism major in the 1960's who turned to social work when she could not find a job on a newspaper.

> "My parents suffered.... My mother -- well, you know her. In one breath she would try to comfort me by cursing them: 'But God blind them'" - and Reena's voice captured her mother's aggressive accent - "'if you had come looking for a job mopping down their floors they would o' hired you, the brutes' ... And in the next breath she would curse me, 'Journalism! Journalism! Whoever heard of colored people taking up journalism? You must feel you's white or something so. The people is right to chuck you out their office... '" 39

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of African-Americans obtaining higher education. One can attribute this partly to the pressure the liberation movements put on colleges to admit Third World people. One report shows that in 1960, 135,000 Blacks were in college; in 1976, the number was 748,000 -- up 454%.[40] African-American women have been making inroads into managerial positions in business, law, communications, government and medicine.

Continuities

Job Discrimination Continues: There are many discouraging continuities in the nature of African-American women's economic options. New job options or not, African-American women are still at the bottom of the economic ladder in terms of wages and unemployment. Most African-American women cannot choose to not work. Women's incomes keep many Black families out of poverty. Many middle-class Black women are also compelled to work since their incomes often help retain their middle-class economic status.

Some people believe that Black women have an advantage over Black men because Caucasians do not discriminate against the women as much as the men. Unemployment statistics in this country have consistently disproved that belief. For example, in 1969, unemployment rates were as follows:[41]

White men	1.9%
Black men	3.7%
White women	3.4%
Black women	6.0%

Studies made by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) showed that a significant number of large companies, which tend to pay good wages, had much tighter restrictions against hiring Black women than Black men.[42] This means that low-income women are heavily concentrated in low-paying laborer and service worker categories. The situation is also dismal when "white collar" jobs are considered. Government statistics show that 38% of Black women work in these jobs in comparison with 23% of Black men. Yet, it has been pointed out that these "white collar" jobs tend to be lower-paying and more menial than "blue collar" jobs.

The following figures for median yearly wages for full-time work done in 1972 are revealing of racial and sexual discrimination:[43]

White males	$11,000
Black males	$ 9,200
White females	$ 6,100
Black females	$ 5,200

Because of the gender stereotyping of jobs, Black women with one to three years of college earn less than Black men with one to three years of high school, and less than white men with an eighth grade education. In addition, because of racial discrimination in jobs, African-American women do not fare well when compared with white women. The chart below shows growth and improvement for Black women in job opportunities in professional and skilled categories; it also shows a persistent gap between the labor distributions of white women and Black women in this country in professional/ technical and clerical occupations.[44]

Percent Distribution of Employment by Occupation and Sex

	1966		1970	
	Black Women	White Women	Black Women	White Women
Total Employment	100	100	100	100
Professional and Technical Occupations	8.4	13.7	12	19
Clerical Occupations	13.8	42.3	22	44

Black Professional Women Face Discrimination: While we earlier noted an increase in the number of Black women in the professions, data collected by the U.S. Bureau of Census in 1973 show that most Black professional women were employed in service-oriented fields such as nursing and related health fields. They are grossly underrepresented in architecture, computer science, engineering, medicine, and the physical sciences.[45]

COMPARISON: This situation is similar to that of the majority of the women in the United States.

Those women who have jobs in what were traditionally considered to be men's fields have struggled to "prove" themselves, producing far beyond what the work itself required. For example, Patricia Moore, a general agent for an insurance company, comments:

> I have never sold anything before in my life, and when I first started (with the company) I was so afraid to fail that I think I overdid. I sold one million dollars' worth of insurance in my first six months of work...Yet, it's hard for men that I'm a competitor. It hurts their pride...Sometimes I get questions like, what does your husband say about you making all that money? 46

Another African-American woman discussed the need to exhibit great patience, "since you will advance more slowly." She says:

> Above all, you must remain feminine and not appear threatened. I have found that Black women share these dicta with white women. However, Black women have an extra step in the syllogism which white women do not have, that is that they must also be better than white women. 47

Black professional women also face the problem of a lack of role models of women who have survived in a predominantly male work environment. Feelings of loneliness and isolation can occur. An administrator in a top level university describes her situation:

> ...I never come in contact with another Black woman professor or administrator in my day-to-day activities. This seems to be typical for most of the Black women in similar positions. There is no one on whom a Black woman can model herself. It takes a great deal of psychological strength "just to get through the day," the endless lunches, the meetings in which one is

> always "different." The feeling is much like the exhaustion a foreigner speaking in an alien tongue feels at the end of the day. 48

> *DISCUSSION:*
>
> *Have students describe times when they have felt they were in the "minority" in a situation and were expected to perform in a more outstanding fashion than would ordinarily have been the case.*

Low-Income Black Women: On all counts, poor Black women are on the lowest rung of the economic ladder.

> *COMPARISON: In the United States, Third World women are overrepresented in low status, low-paying jobs, in unemployment lines, among those living below poverty level, and among those heading families as single women.*

As a result of the pressure of the liberation movements, the government did become more concerned about the poor, creating intervention programs such as the War on Poverty. Yet, there remains a group caught in the poverty cycle. Of this group no one is trapped more than the Third World woman who is a single parent.

> *DISCUSSION:*
>
> *Why is poverty a "cycle" for poor single women with children?*

Because her options are so limited, a poor woman with children may have to become dependent on the welfare system. This system usually offers certain types of aid on the condition that males are proven to be absent from the home. Welfare money itself barely keeps a family at subsistence level. Figures released in 1973 show that in families headed by women, most work and are not totally dependent on welfare.[49] The reality for poor Black women is that they have a "significant amount of family responsibility and need for income but have a lower income than the Black male or white female."[50] In recent years, the growth of the Welfare Rights Organization, composed mainly of Third World women on welfare, is a sign of the growing desire of low-income people to confront and change the nature of the welfare system.

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

After reading this article, which appeared in Women in 1975, react to the discussion questions which follow it.

Some Thoughts About My Life and the Cost of Living

by Roselle Williams

I grew up in Wellington. Two brothers, two sisters; the family was real close together. I had a nice childhood, did nice in school. I did a lot of drawing in school. Wellington is a little small town, off to itself. A neat little place, close knit. Everybody knows everybody in Wellington.

We moved into the city, Baltimore, when I was 16. I quit school for a while and went to work in this sign shop. We did everything, silkscreen, displays, printed cards. Then me and this man, we opened our own sign shop. We did OK, but I got bored, you know. I was young, wanted to go on to more adventures. And I wanted to go into the service, wanted that more than anything else in the world. From kindergarten to twelfth grade, all I wanted to do was go in the service. Must have been something about those uniforms that fascinated me. I'd go now but I've got my kids, so I guess I'm stuck. Got to pick another career. Aside from going in the service, what I'd really like to do is go to school for art. I would really love to do that.

I was 19 when I got married. I was working at the Hot Shoppe as a salad girl, but then I got pregnant, had my son, and then my other son. I was home all during this time. Things were kind of rough, things really were. So then I went back to work. I got a job at a chicken house and worked there about two years. That was bad on my health. It was always cold, always cold and wet.

I've only got one lung now, had to have the other one taken out. You had to wear boots and heavy clothes. We'd cut the chicken into parts. You had a steel glove on one hand and a big knife in the other hand. People were always cutting themselves; it was real dangerous. And bad on your health.

It was all Black workers, and I was the first woman who ever worked there. When I left, there were seven women. There was a union, but they didn't do anything. The women got paid less than the men. But you didn't say anything or cause trouble or you got fired. Like me, most people didn't stay long. You just found another job.

Then I did stock at the Hecht Co. for a little while, till I got a job at ADM as a machine operator. That was a pretty nice job, except it didn't pay anything. Plus it was too dangerous for the money. You could get your hands or your clothes caught in the machine. One girl got her hair caught. I worked there off and on about three years. After my mother passed away I had to stop because there was no one to watch the kids. I wanted to be home with my kids.

But I found I didn't like being home. My husband was working, but he wasn't the kind of man that wanted a home. He was spending all the money on the street. Under those conditions we just couldn't make it. I felt like, if I'm going to do bad, I'll do bad on my own. You don't need nobody to help you do bad.

So we split up. My niece came and took care of my sons and I went back to work at ADM. The men made more money there than the women. The women made hardly anything, and after a while I just couldn't see working all those hours for that little bit of money, so I went down to Social Services. I didn't want to go on welfare, but I couldn't find a job that paid anything. I was living in the projects then, and if I got a job that paid anything, they'd go up on my rent, so it's no use. Anyway, welfare beats a blank. I mean, while I'm not working, till I get on my feet, it's better than nothing.

The cost of living really affects me. Social Services only gives you enough to survive on. I'm getting $226. That's for four of us, my two sons, my niece and me. Two of them are in junior high and one is in elementary. It's really hard....

On the money welfare gives you, they expect you to go to the Salvation Army and places like that to get clothes for your kids. That's all right when they're little, I guess, but when they're big, especially teenagers, they don't want hand-me-downs all the time. They want some new things, latest styles, like the other kids have.

Everybody I know who's working have older kids, who watch the younger ones, because there's no day-care center around here. Sometimes you can find someone in the neighborhood to watch your kids, but it's not easy.

My father worked at Sparrows Point, at the steel mill, and my mother did day work, cleaning people's houses. While she was working my older brothers and sisters watched me. I didn't want my mother to work. I knew when I grew up, I wouldn't do day work. I didn't like it then and I don't like it now. I know a lot of older women who do day work, but no younger ones. They don't like it either. I don't want to stay home and clean my own house much less go clean somebody else's. I don't like it at all. In fact I'm against it. I don't know, I guess it's a matter of opinion whether you like it or not, but I don't think anybody does it because they like it. They just do it because it's the only way to bring in the extra money, because you don't have to report it. I couldn't do it. The lady would fire me. It seems like slavery or something. And you have your work cut out for you. That day work is hard work. You put some sweat into that work. But if you're cleaning up buildings at night, something like that, you don't have somebody standing over you. You can take your time.

Men seem to have so much freedom. Just wherever they hang their hat, they don't have to worry about anything. But I like it being a mother. I enjoy my kids, I really do. They get on your nerves, like everything else, but they make the house lively. We have a nice little household now.

If I didn't have the kids now, I'd be in the service. I want to travel. There's no way I could travel except going in the service, unless I really make that money. I just don't have the money. My kids and I take small vacations, real small. Cook outs, going to the woods. No hotels, motels, nothing like that, but we have a good time.

I've always liked to work on cars, but I never knew much about it. Especially when I got one of my own, I wanted to know what to do for it. Those garages really take advantage of women, I guess men too, but mostly women, because we usually don't know that much about the car. So I decided to go to school for it, to learn how to fix cars. The program I was in, Manpower, didn't really teach you that much. I was there for six months and can't really say I'm a mechanic. The instructors were too busy for the students, trying to make money for themselves. I could be a mechanic's helper. I got a job at a service station when I got out of there. Had the job a month when I slipped on some oil, broke a couple of ribs and had to stop working. That's why I'm on welfare now, waiting for my health to clear up so I can work.

I don't think auto mechanics is really a man's job. Women have always been interested in it, they just didn't come forward. You get a lot of shit about it from the men. You get it on the street when they see you with the hood of the car up. Here they come running, "Can I help you?" They don't know anything about cars, but they're going to help you. I tell them I can do it myself.

I don't get along too much with the middle class. A lot of them have a tendency to look down on you. Especially with me being an auto mechanic. They don't approve of that. In the hospital I told some of them I was a mechanic. "A what? Why would you want to do a man's job?" they'd say. I'd say, "Why do you think it's a man's job?" "Oh, it's too hard," they'd say. If I had to say I was in a class, I'd say working class, but I don't think about it much. I don't know anybody that talks about it. 51

DISCUSSION:

Roselle wanted a career in the armed forces. What were some of the influences on her which prevented this? (Married at 19, had children)

List the kinds of jobs Roselle could get. List the reasons why she left her jobs.

Welfare can be seen as a continuation of the economic powerlessness of Black women. Why did Roselle go on welfare? (Jobs paid too little; women paid less than men; lived in government housing and would have to leave if she got a good job; got ill; had children to support)

Identify the times Roselle was discriminated against because she is a female. (At chicken house and in union there; at work at ADM, by people against her becoming an auto mechanic)

Matriarchy Myth: Black women have long had to deal with the widespread existence of stereotypes about their social and psychological characteristics. A recent stereotype is that of the "emasculating" matriarch. In March, 1965, the federal government issued the Moynihan Report (The Negro Family: The Case for National Action). Essentially, this report communicated the myth that the Black family was an aberrant version of the white middle class model because women "dominated" the family. Black women were therefore responsible for the supposed lack of advancement of the Black race. Although the matriarchy thesis has become unpopular, and few contemporary researchers give it credence, the fact remains that the impact on both whites and Blacks of this stereotype has been great and remains an obstacle to the power of Black women. It is interesting that the Moynihan theory was projected by the government at the time the Civil Rights Movement in the south was giving way to the rising Black Power sentiment in the cities. This timing is seen by some as an insidious way to try to convince African-Americans that the root cause of their social, economic and political problems lay within themselves. It was also a way to divide the sexes.[52]

African-American women have been united in their effort to confront this stereotype of the matriarch. They currently argue that:

1. A matriarchy is defined as a system of social organization in which descent and inheritance are traced through the female line. In Black families in the United States, descent and inheritance are not passed on through the female line. 53
2. Only 25% of Black families are headed by women; most Black families are two-parent families. Ninety percent of Black families with incomes over $10,000 are headed by males. 54
3. The matriarchy myth misreads history. When some Black men were denied jobs and Black women moved

to fill the gap, they still earned less than anyone else and certainly did not necessarily become the decision-makers in the family. As Aileen Hernandez has noted, to the dominant community "the sight of women earning money seemed 'matriarchal' no matter how terrible the hardship." 55

4. Because of their African heritage and the experiences of slavery, most African-American women and men tend to have more flexible roles in the family than many whites. This, too, was seen as "unnatural" by the majority culture. 56

Economically, the matriarchy myth has created problems. The fear of being labelled "dominant" or "aggressive" has kept some women from seeking higher positions. The myth has kept some employers from hiring a Black woman over a Black man, and has meant that in government job training programs, strong preference has been given to males, with most females being prevented from participation.

COMPARISON: In Africa during colonialism, Europeans trained men and not women for jobs in the new technology.

PERSONAL POWER

Focus Questions:

In looking at continuities and changes in the personal power of modern Black women, notice if they have more control over:

- *the use of their bodies;*
- *whether or not to have children;*
- *whom they marry;*
- *mistreatment in marriage;*
- *divorce;*
- *where to live;*
- *people to whom they relate;*
- *how society views the changes in their lives.*

In what ways do women have more power than previously?

In what ways do women have less power than previously?

TEACHER'S NOTE: If you find parts of this section difficult to discuss, ignore anything you feel uncomfortable with and instead use the readings or articles to relay comparable information on personal power. Toni Cade's anthology, The Black Woman, has many articles and first-person accounts on this subject.

It would also be important to find articles by men that reflect their point of view regarding their own changes in power as well as women's changes. Students should keep in mind that at this point in history, male/female tensions about roles are prevalent in every culture. Students might discuss their feelings about the impact of the women's movement on the relationships of men and women they know.

New Images of Self: There are definite changes in the way many Black women view themselves today. They have more self-confidence and assertiveness than they did during the slavery and jimcrow years; they are more aware of the value of Black women as competent workers, creative professionals, supporters of their families, and fighters against the oppression of Third World groups.

On one level, Aretha Franklin reflects such personal change when she talks about herself in an Ebony Magazine interview. She used to be terribly shy and unable to relate to many people; she felt she needed to look more glamorous and thus "came off looking very starched, acting very starched." Aretha talked about a "brand new me" who "walked tall" and was proud of herself just the way she was. Why the change? One big influence on her was the new feeling of Black pride:

> Well, I believe that the Black Revolution certainly forced me and all Black people... to take a second look at ourselves. It wasn't that we were all that ashamed of

> ourselves, we merely started appreciating our natural selves...sort of, you know, falling in love with ourselves just as we are. We found that we had far more to be proud of. 57

After years of oppression, females are consciously seeking respect from everyone involved in their lives: friends, husbands, employers, children, and parents.

The "Black is beautiful" orientation which emanated from the Black Power Movement and from closer contacts with Africa has also encouraged women to define themselves in ways more physically compatible with their African heritage. Sarah in "Silent Voices: The Southern Negro Woman Today" talks about how she confronted the ideals of white beauty and re-evaluated her own beauty in terms of more meaningful standards.

> I spent three years hatin' white women so much it nearly made me crazy. It came from discovering how the whole world had this white idea of beauty. See, the western world concept of beauty is your kind of beauty, not mine...the ads and all that -- they still think in terms of narrow noses and light skin and straight hair...And I mean, I just hated that so much that for three years I wouldn't speak to a white woman. And then I realized what I was doing to myself. I was losing my self-respect and even losing my looks. I finally had to work myself out of it. I had to find a new sense of my own dignity, and what I really had to do was start seeing all over again, in a new way. That's one thing Negroes are trying to do now -- to see differently. That's hard! 58

Adele and Cenan in "Ebony Minds, Black Voices" discuss their changing self-images.

> Adele: Cenan said something before about the natural being in effect a way to pull your mind into your own color, into your own being. I got mine years ago when few naturals were around and I went through some changes...And though it's a fad now, it's still identified with Black nationalism.

> Cenan: ... And it's telling white people that we're not going to allow them to tell us what they want -- hair cut short and stuff. It's also telling them to watch out. We're not perpetuating slave-mindedness. 59

For Adele and Cenan, wearing their hair in a natural becomes a statement about their new sense of self. Yet, this consciousness and identification with Blackness also has led some women to note that external statements and labels ultimately will not buy self-respect, that a woman has to validate her self by knowing on her own that she is important. Gale Griffin states this:

> During the late sixties and early seventies the Black female went out of her way to prove that she was Black. Her effort surpassed that of her male counterpart. Yet, she was rejected by the Black man for being "unfeminine" and "too strong" or "elusive." She is still treated with disrespect by whites. Let us demand total humanity. We have always been Black. 60

Motherhood and Family: Black pride also has influenced a woman's relationship with her children. Historically, Black mothers, fearing for their children's safety, tended to teach them to show obedience and compliance to whites.

> *COMPARISON: There are a number of possible comparisons to Chinese-American families. For example, the anti-Chinese tension in the 1950's reinforced Chinese-American parents' feeling that they should become "invisible" to the larger society so they would not be hassled. See selections in Longtime Californ' and Fifth Chinese Daughter.*

Today, African-American women are apt to teach their children pride in their race and culture and defiance toward racists. In Reena, by Paule Marshall, Reena is consciously trying to ensure that her children never assimilate negative feelings about themselves from the dominant, white culture.

> I will feel that I have done well by them if I give them, if nothing more, a sense of themselves

> and their own worth and importance as Black people. Everything I do with them, for them, is to this end. I don't want them ever to be confused about this. They must have their identification straight from the beginning. No white dolls for them! 61

For some, the liberation movements of the past decade have created a generation gap, as in two humorous short stories in Black-Eyed Susans ("My Man Bovanne" and "Everyday Use") in which the younger generation tries to get the older generation to conform to more militant ideals. A positive aspect in both these stories is the way the older women somehow remain true to themselves. They are unsure and shaken by their daughters' rejections; yet, each woman ultimately asserts the way that works for her.

Some parents express a very open attitude toward change, as in this quote from "The Revolt of the Poor Women."

> In 1969, through the white Women's Liberation Movement, we received an opportunity to meet with North and South Vietnamese revolutionary women invited to Canada by U.S. and Canadian women. All of us wanted to go but Black people were now being urban "removed" and we were uptight about where we were going to live. So, in our place, we let some of our teen-age children go with young Black women we had grown to trust. Like us, these women were struggling to help others who lived around them. They were standing up to their parents who really did threaten them with the FBI, and loss of all privileges if they went to see those communists. These young women would not be stopped and we believed in them even more when we saw this kind of courage. We were proud to let our children go with this new generation of young Black people.
>
> We also understood their parents. They were reactionary, poor like us but addicted to a system they wanted into even though it exploited us all. 62

The sentence "All of us wanted to go but Black people were now being urban 'removed' and we were uptight about where we were going to live" indicates that if the youth were alone on the front lines of movements for change, it was sometimes only because their parents were too busy surviving.

One continuity in Black women's situation is reflected in their relationship to the institution of motherhood. It is valued as highly as it ever was. Yet, change has come in that African-American women can now choose more freely whether or not to accept the role of motherhood. Around 1940, there was a large increase in the Black population; during the forties, the birthrate was twice that of the thirties and increased at a rate of 2% a year until the 1960's.[63] Since then, it has declined at the same rate as for white women. Obviously, Black women are now choosing to limit the size of their families.

Since for years a major form of birth control for women has been abortion, and since too often abortions have been done "in the hands of quacks," many Black women have organized groups to campaign for the repeal of anti-abortion laws.[64]

COMPARISON: Some African-American women share the viewpoint of many women in the U.S. that birth control has been more important to women than getting the vote. Although there are cultural and religious differences among groups over the question of birth control, for the majority of women, the availability of birth control is a significant change from the limitations their mothers and/or grandmothers endured.

Some changes make the Black woman's role as mother more difficult. With the increasing replacement of the extended family unit by the nuclear family, women do not have access to the collective care of children the extended family provided. Consequently, they, like other women in America, want better day care centers and, in some cases, more child care responsibilities assumed by the fathers.

The following are two excerpts from Joanna Clark's piece "Motherhood." She writes of her experiences searching for adequate day care for her children so that she could finish her last semester at college and find work. Joanna had just recently separated from her husband.

> I called the Day Care Council to find where the nearest school was. The woman on the other end of the line wanted to know why I needed a nursery. I told her that I had to work. She seemed insulted. "What do you mean, you have to work? In New York City there's no such thing as a mother having to work. You can go on welfare!" I told her that I didn't want to go on welfare. The last thing I wanted to do was sit around all day in my Lower East Side hovel. I wanted to do something to get out of it. I didn't get the address of the nursery, but she did tell me where my nearest friendly welfare office was. On my own I found several nurseries and tried to register my children. If what those schools say about their waiting lists is true, three-quarters of their prospective clients will be through graduate school before there is an opening for them in the four-year-old group.

Later, Joanna tries to get her husband to take care of the children. She finds out that he is considered to be doing his share if he gives her $15 a week in child support.

> "...Well, I can't take care of two children on fifteen dollars a week. Let him do it. He can have them right now." That really brought the probation officer to her feet. "You can't desert your children. That's against the law."
>
> "How can I be deserting them? I'm giving them to their father."
>
> "But you can't do that! You're the mother." People, especially those without children, sometimes have a way of saying "mother" that I find incredible. They manage to pronounce a halo around it. I suppose if you're in the mood you feel like the Virgin Mary. I wasn't in the mood. "Suppose I offer to give him fifteen dollars a week along with the children. Would that be better?" It would not. Apparently if I tried to leave the building without two children she had the right to call the police. 65

DISCUSSION:

What changes occurred in the Black mother's role between the jimcrow years and now as evidenced by the several excerpts you just read?

> *Are motherhood and children truly valued in this country? Present arguments pro and con.*
>
> *Do you feel fathers should assume parenting responsibilities beyond child support?*
>
> *What are some ways men's roles as fathers are changing?*

In contrast to Joanna's experience, there are many aspects of Black family life which are positive continuations of the past. Black pride has encouraged African-Americans to acknowledge these salient features which have roots in African culture and the experiences of slavery. Specifically, note these points.

- husband and wife tend to achieve an equitable balance of role expectations;
- husband and wife generally share authority in the home;
- both are usually responsible for the economic support of the family;
- both sexes tend to take the initiative in forming and breaking up marriages;
- both tend to be nurturing and highly interactive physically with children; and,
- where one parent is missing, extended kinship patterns still may provide supportive resources to cope with economic and emotional crises. 66

Relationships with Men: African-American women's relationships with Black men are a constant theme in the readings. Often the discussion concerns tension between the sexes. Some of the tensions described are due to the continuing problems that beset people in low-income communities. Harrisene Jackson in her autobiography, There's Nothing I Own That I Want, laments:

> My husband, friend, and comrade, T.J., is gone. I hope for good, but that is up to me. He'll bounce back like a boomerang as long as I let

> him. Day-to-day struggle and existing tore our "thing" to ribbons. Opening an empty refrigerator day after day got to him. It gets to me also. But I have a purpose in life -- to be my children's rock -- and since I am all they have, I must "keep on keeping on." 67

Male-female relationships among African-Americans still suffer from damaging labels and myths. For a woman, this means being pictured as the hard, tough head of the family. Toni Cade noted the reaction of some women to this recurring Black matriarch myth:

> (Black women) tend to run, leap, fly to the pots and pans, the back rows, the shadows, eager to justify themselves in terms of ass, breasts, collard greens just to prove that they are not the evil, ugly, domineering monsters of tradition. 68

Others, seeing that these myths divide men and women, are demanding respect from men. Again from Harrisene Jackson:

> I know that until the Black man makes himself responsible physically, spiritually and materially for his Black sisters, there ain't going to be no freedom and no respect for any of us as a people. 69

> *COMPARISON: A woman in modern West Africa expressed this thought: "We African women can never expect to be respected by women of other races until our men change their attitude toward us." 70*

Some women simply refuse to be underrated by men.

> We've contributed too much to the household, to the social fabric, to the movement, been too indispensable and productive and creative to be invisible, overlooked, laid aside. 71

Some believe, however, that male-female relationships will remain strained as long as both sexes name each other as the source of their oppression. Like Toni Cade, they hope for a new dialogue between the sexes; they hope to "pursue a new vision of man and woman."[72]

Maulana Ron Karenga in his article "In Love and Struggle: Toward a Greater Togetherness" also calls for a new dialogue between Black men and women. He begins by noting that African-Americans survived in America mainly because they were a "whole people, not a people hacked apart into hostile halves." Yet, he feels that there are recurring images men and women have about each other that separate them and thus make them both powerless in their struggle against racism.

> Historically, we Black men and Black women have been unkind to each other. We have believed and spread the lies of our oppressor much too often. We have sent each other to hospitals, graves and prison, fought for days like dogs and many times made mad love immediately afterwards.
> ...Many myths have been created to crush the Black woman and destroy her image, to reduce to rubble and raw sex her relationship with her man and to deny and cover up her contribution in our struggle to be a free and creative people. ...And the enduring tragedy of all this is that many Black men and even some Black women have accepted, supported and even added to these invidious images and interpretations. We went and still go for too many games, too many lies that undermine our love and life together.
> ...Historically, the Black woman has proved there's more to women than being a pink playmate, lying around looking empty and useless and limited in self-assertion to providing sex and sons for her man. The Black woman is not nor has she ever been the "weaker sex." Black men and Black women have always been equal; not just in a human sense but equal also in oppression and therefore, equal in the revolutionary struggle to rid ourselves of it. The collective needs and nature of our struggle placed us side by side, regardless of how some of us would have otherwise wanted it.
> ...We can no longer talk of our women being "in back" of us in the old sense of her being a silent, servile supporter. Our women must become conscious and committed agents of social change, as well as men. And this requires that the rituals and relics from the past that provide artificial fortification for fragile male self-concepts be discontinued.

> ...Finally, we need to eliminate use of the language that rises from self-hatred and hustling and reflects itself in so many ways in our relationships. How can we love if we call each other names that degrade us and destroy our will to be anything except what we're called? ...We are both equally in need of new ways of relating, of ways to work ourselves into each other and find there a love we've always longed for. 73

DISCUSSION:

What are reasons Karenga feels a new dialogue between men and women is needed?

Can you think of ways women you know put men down? Ways men put women down? Why does this happen? What is the end result of this "battle of the sexes"? Can you see how this lack of mutual support may weaken each person's power?

Other factors have produced tensions. One is the increasing competition among African-American women for the limited number of Black men. While the difference in the ratio of Black men to Black women has existed since 1850,[74] the problem is greater today because (1) ghetto living produces high mortality rates for men; (2) there is a high percentage of African-American men in the armed forces and wars such as the Vietnam War have decreased their numbers; and, (3) there are a number of Black men in the nation's jails, partly because it is harder for poor people to pay for adequate defense. Between the ages of 25 and 65, there are about 85 males for every 100 females.[75]

Adele in "Ebony Minds, Black Voices" discusses a situation which might be familiar to many women but has special significance for African-American women.

> Adele: We've allowed that to be the case, competition for each other. I've been at parties with a sister and like you both spot the same brother at the same time, and all the rest of the party the two of you are on edge. Meanwhile the brother hasn't approached either of you. I

> think it's kind of ridiculous. We perpetuate that sort of living...
>
> Sally: The first thing you think is that the other woman is a threat to you, gonna take your man. A Black woman cannot feel that the man is hers entirely. He's gonna look around. 76

The competition problem is compounded by the fact that, starting in the more racially relaxed years of the Civil Rights Movement, some African-American men sought white women as partners, while African-American women, usually trained early in life to avoid white men, were left alone. Some Black men idealized the white woman, not only for her looks but also for her supposedly easygoing temperament. She was seen as more "feminine" and less domineering than the Black woman.

Robert Staples writes that Black men "are known to disparage Black women without having associated with, let alone having been married to, a white woman...he resorts to evaluating the Black woman by what he sees and imagines the white woman to be."[77]

At a time when Black was finally seen to be beautiful, it was a particularly bitter pill for Black women to see some Black men choose white women. In the years of the Civil Rights Movement, Alice Walker's character Meridian is shocked and then bitter when her old boyfriend starts dating the white exchange students:

> "Hi," she said, feeling embarrassed to see him now that he was busy dating the exchange students. It was strange and unfair, but the fact that he dated them -- and so obviously because their color made them interesting -- made her ashamed, as if she were less.
>
> For she realized what she had been taught was that nobody wanted white girls. (As far back as she could remember it seemed something understood: that while white men would climb on Black women old enough to be their mothers -- 'for the experience' -- white women were considered sexless, contemptible and ridiculous by all.) 78

It is also noted in Meridian that the Black men in the story were relating to white women mainly in terms of the stereotypes they held about them, and not in terms of their characteristics as individuals.

> They did not even see her (the white woman) as a human being, but as some kind of large, mysterious doll. A thing of movies and television, of billboards and car and soap commercials. They liked her hair, not because it was especially pretty, but because it was so long. To them, length was beauty. They loved the tails of horses. [79]

The women's movements, too, have produced strains between the sexes that are felt by most all groups in the U.S. Many men are not comfortable seeing women qualifying for jobs once held mainly by men, and questioning men's right to behave as the final authority in relationships. Many women can relate to what the writer Zora Neale Hurston experienced; she chose to end a relationship with a man because he wanted to be the only priority in her life: "To me there was no conflict. My work was one thing, and he was all of the rest. But, I could not make him see that."[80]

New Directions: In summary, it is quite clear that African-American women, like women throughout the world, are looking anew at themselves and are redefining their needs based on their own self-assessments. Some Black women today, like Alice Walker, are looking beyond themselves as individuals -- becoming "committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of Black women" as a group. Alice Walker thinks of the "mountain of work Black women must do" in order to learn about themselves.

> How simple a thing it seems to me: that to know ourselves as we are, we must know our mothers' names. Yet, we do not know them. Or if we do, it is only the names we know and not the lives. We must work as if we are the last generation capable of work...(because) Black women are the most fascinating creatures in the world. [81]

TEACHER'S NOTE: You might use the above quote as a lead-in to the Oral History Unit.

Notes

[1] Cellestine Ware, Woman power: the movement for women's liberation (New York: Tower Publications, 1970), p. 11 .

[2] Michele Russell, "The Black Woman," in Peters and Samuels, eds., Dialogue on diversity (New York: Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity, 1976), p. 31.

[3] Daisy Bates, The long shadow of Little Rock: a memoir (New York: David McKay Co., 1962), pp. 73-75.

[4] Ernest Gaines, The autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 228.

[5] Hofstadter and Miller, The United States, 4th edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 668.

[6] Vernaline Watson, "Self-Concept Formation and the Afro-American Woman," in Johnson and Green, eds., Perspectives on Afro-American women (Washington, D.C.: EECE Publications, Inc., 1975).

[7] Nancy Seifer, Nobody speaks for me! (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976), p. 157.

[8] Alice Walker, Meridian (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1976), p. 206.

[9] Anne Moody, Coming of age in Mississippi (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1965), p. 254.

[10] John O'Brien, ed., Interviews with black writers (New York: Liveright, Inc., 1973), p. 194.

[11] Shirley Chisholm, Unbought and unbossed (New York: Avon Books, 1970), p. 64.

[12] Chisholm: Pursuing the Dream, n.d., (New York: New Line Cinema).

[13] Nikki Giovanni, Gemini (New York: Viking Press, 1971), pp. 34-35.

[14] Walker, *Op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

[15] Philip Foner, ed., *The voice of Black America, volume 2* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1972), pp. 565-566.

[16] Giovanni, *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

[17] Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black women in white America: a documentary history* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 566.

[18] "Letters," *Ms*. 3:2 (August 1974), p. 6.

[19] Lerner, *Op. cit.*, pp. 350-352.

[20] Janice Gump, "Comparative Analysis of Black Women's and White Women's Sex Role Attitudes," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 43:6, 1975, p. 862.

[21] William Blakey, "Everybody Makes the Revolution," *Civil Rights Digest*, Spring 1974, p. 19.

[22] Giovanni, *Op. cit.*, p. 145.

[23] Geraldine Rickman, "A Natural Alliance," *Civil Rights Digest*, Spring 1974, p. 62.

[24] Margaret Sloan, "Black Feminism: A New Mandate," *Ms*. 2:11 (May 1974), p. 99.

[25] "Letters," *Ms*. 3:2 (August 1974), p. 12.

[26] Lerner, *Op. cit.*, p. 609-610.

[27] Eleanor Norton, "The Woman Who Changed the South: A Memory of Fannie Lou Hamer," *Ms*. (July 1977), p. 51.

[28] Lerner, *Op. cit.*, p. 276.

[29] *Ibid*.

[30] Frances Beal, "Slave of a Slave No More: Black Women in Struggle," *The Black Scholar* 6:6 (March 1975), p. 7.

[31] Walker, *Op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

[32] Yvonne, "The Importance of Cicely Tyson," *Ms*. 3:2 (August 1974), p. 77.

[33] Lerner, *Op*. *cit*., p. 268.

[34] Madeline Anderson, *I Am Somebody*, 1970, (Berkeley: Extension Media Center, University of California).

[35] Lerner, *Op*. *cit*., p. 280.

[36] Ron Chernow, "All in a Day's Work," *Mother Jones* (August 1976), pp. 11-12.

[37] *Ibid*.

[38] Lerner, *Op*. *cit*., pp. 219-226.

[39] Paule Marshall, "Reena," in Cade, ed., *The Black woman: an anthology* (New York: Mentor Books, 1970), p. 30.

[40] PBS Report, "15 Years of Black Progress," *In Search of the Real America Series*, Ben Wattenberg, narrator, Spring 1977.

[41] U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Commerce, *The Social and Economic Status of Negros in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 30.

[42] Sonia Pressman, "Job Discrimination and the Black Woman," *Crisis* 77:3 (March 1970, pp. 106-107.

[43] Willie Reid, "Changing Attitudes Among Black Women," *Black women's struggle for equality* (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1976), p. 7.

[44] Lerner, *Op*. *cit*., p. 319.

[45] Patricia Scott, *Preparing Black women for nontraditional professions: some considerations for career counseling* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee, n.d.), mimeographed, p. 3.

[46] Beverly Jensen, "Black and Female Too," *Black Enterprise*, (July 1976), p. 29.

[47] Scott, *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[49] Robert Staples, *The Black woman in America* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1973), p. 20.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[51] Roselle Williams, "Some Thoughts About My Life and the Cost of Living," *Women* 4:2 (Spring 1975).

[52] Reid, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

[53] Aileen Hernandez, "Small Change for Black Women," *Ms.* 3:2 (August 1974), p. 16.

[54] Staples, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

[55] Hernandez, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] Charles Sanders, "Aretha: Close-up Look at Sister Superstar," *Ebony*, (December 1971), pp. 124-134.

[58] Josephine Carson, "Silent Voices: The Southern Negro Woman Today," in Watkins and David, eds., *To be a Black woman* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1970), pp. 243-244.

[59] Adele Jones and Group, "Ebony Minds, Black Voices," in Cade, ed., *Op. cit.*, pp. 181-182.

[60] Sloan, *Op. cit.*, p. 98.

[61] Marshall, *Op. cit.*, p. 264.

[62] The Damned, *Lessons from the damned: class struggle in the black community* (San Francisco: Times Change, 1973), p. 96.

[63] Staples, *Op. cit.*, p. 136.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

[65] Joanna Clark, "Motherhood," in Cade, ed., *Op*. *cit*., pp. 65,67.

[66] Diane Lewis, "The Black Family: Socialization and Sex Roles," *Phylon* 36:3 (Fall 1975), pp. 229-230.

[67] Harrisene Jackson, *There's nothing I own that I want* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 164.

[68] Toni Cade, "The Pill: Genocide or Liberation?," in Cade, ed., *Op*. *cit*., p. 163.

[69] Jackson, *Op*. *cit*., p. 146.

[70] Kenneth Little, *African women in towns: an aspect of Africa's social revolution* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 183.

[71] Cade, *Op*. *cit*., p. 165.

[72] *Ibid*.

[73] Ron Karenga, "In Love and Struggle: Toward a Greater Togetherness," *The Black scholar* 6:6 (March 1976), pp. 18-26.

[74] Barbara Sizemore, "Sexism and the Black Male," *The Black scholar* 4:6-7 (March-April 1973), p. 4.

[75] Staples, *Op*. *cit*., p. 21.

[76] Jones, *Op*. *cit*., p. 184.

[77] Staples, *Op*. *cit*., p. 107.

[78] Walker, *Op*. *cit*., p. 103.

[79] *Ibid*., p. 69.

[80] Zora Hurston, *Dust tracks on a road* (New York: Lippincott, 1971), p. 254.

[81] "Letters," *Ms*. 3:2 (August 1974), p. 5.

Student Learning Materials

Continuity and Change

First-hand accounts: selections

Cade, Toni, ed. The Black woman: an anthology. New York: Mentor Books, 1974. 256pp. Paper. $1.50.

Stories, poems and essays "that seem best to reflect the preoccupations of the contemporary Black woman in this country." (Introduction, p. 11). Helpful introduction and biographical notes.

- Clark, Joanna. "Motherhood" (pp. 63-72).
  A funny/sad description of the hassles of a woman alone raising small children. She is trying to get out from under motherhood and attempting to get the father and the government to share responsibility for the children.
- Jones, Adele, and group. "Ebony minds, Black voices" (pp. 180-188).
  A discussion among a group of young women at Harlem University in 1969. They talk about personal changes with men, parents and each other.
- Brown, Carole. "From the family notebook" (pp. 232-236).
  The author's light skin makes it hard for her to be accepted by many African-Americans. She discusses her jobs, tokenism and a teacher concerned with Black identity who influenced her.

Carson, Josephine. Silent voices: the southern Negro woman today. New York: Delacorte, 1969. 273pp. Hardcover. $6.95.

Interviews with a variety of Black southern women from maid to community organizer, from poor to middle class. Rosenfelt, in Strong women, calls this a "superbly written account...Carson allows them to speak in their own voices...but she has structured their accounts with a novelist's art." (p. 10).

- "Mrs. Charity Simmons, civil rights worker" (pp. 13-18, 93-95).
  Mrs. Simmons discusses her growing up, marriage and having children. In the later pages, she discusses sexism in the Civil Rights Movement.
- "Become someone else forever" (pp. 158-171).
  This selection begins with ads showing the impact of the white standard of beauty on Black women. Some of these could be read aloud for class reaction. Next, students at an all-Black Louisiana college talk about beauty, men and working. Finally, Mrs. Roland, school teacher and wife of a wealthy New Orleans physician, is interviewed and comments about passing, mulattas, prostitution, economic security and the Civil Rights

Movement. Though long, this is a provocative selection.

- "Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Adams" (pp. 196-202).
  Two older women have come to a Movement conference. Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Adams reflect the changes the Movement was capable of making for some women. Mrs. Hall's story is especially dramatic. On the last page, the author and two other white women are challenged by militant young Blacks.
- "Mrs. Willard" (pp. 226-230).
  Mrs. Willard talks about sexism in the Baptist Church and her response to it.
- "Howard University" (pp. 243-249).
  This is a good selection to use with the college group discussion on "Become someone else forever." If you do not draw on both, this group discussion still makes a good contrast with the last part of the selection, an interview with Sandy, the campus radical.
- "Sarah, civil rights worker" (pp. 253-257).
  This is a short, but powerful, selection which focuses on the problem of Black identity. It is also found in Watkins and David, eds., To be a Black woman, below.

Lerner, Gerda, ed. Black women in white America: a documentary history. New York: Vintage Books, 1973. 630pp. Paper. $3.95.

A large and important collection of sources in a largely ignored area of history. The editor's preface, the notes on sources, the bibliographic notes and the commentary which runs throughout provide a valuable framework and guide to further study.

Unionism:

- "The domestic workers' union" (pp. 231-234).
- "Bolden, Dorothy. "Organizing domestic workers in Atlanta, Georgia" (pp. 234-238).
  The selections should be read together. Notice the change between the 1930's and the 1960's as Bolden gives credit to the Civil Rights Movement for helping her get started as an organizer.
- "Organizing at Winston-Salem, North Carolina" (pp. 265-266).
- Flowers, Estelle. "Why I need a pay raise" (p. 267).
- Cooper, Luanna. "A rank-and-file unionist speaks" (pp. 267-269).
- Smith, Moranda. "Black workers and unions" (pp. 272-274).
- "Tobacco workers honor fighting union leader" (pp. 272-274).
  These selections should be read together, as they all concern organizing Black tobacco workers in

the late 1940's. They show how racism and sexism operated in the tobacco industry and speak to the tradition of struggle which antedates the civil rights, Black power and women's movements. Continuity is more the theme here than change.

Political:

- Baker, Ella. "Developing community leadership" (pp. 345-352).
  Ella Baker discusses her work with the NAACP in the 1940's, with the SCLC in the late 1950's, and with SNCC and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in the 1960's. She thus covers many years of change and concludes her remarks with some observations about women's role in them.
- Chisholm, Shirley. "The 51% minority" (pp. 352-357).
  Chisholm, like Baker, pays tribute to the political heritage of women.
- Bates, Daisy. "The ordeal of the children" (pp. 414-424).
  Describes the physical and psychological torture endured by Black students attempting to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas (1957).
- Moody, Anne. "All I could think of was how sick Mississippi whites were" (pp. 425-431).
  Anne Moody describes her participation in one of the early sit-ins. Like the Bates selection, this one reveals the violence and psychological resistance to integration.
- "The poor help themselves: The Vine City Foundation, Atlanta, Georgia" (pp. 512-517).
  A community of low-income Blacks learns how to work together and make changes. An example of the new climate of the late 1960's.
- "Operation Daily Bread: The National Council of Negro Women" (pp. 517-520).
  In 1969 the NCNW attempted to organize self-help programs among the impoverished Black residents of Sunflower County, Mississippi. In addition, the organization appealed for help from the federal government. The appeal was unsuccessful, but it is important to note that the climate of change in 1969 made such an appeal worth trying.

Personal:

- Jackson, Mahalia. "The strength of the Negro mother" (pp. 584-585).
  It's not communists behind the civil rights movement, it's Black mothers doing what they've always done: holding their heads up high and showing the way to their children.
- Abubakari, Dara. "The Black woman is liberated in her own mind" (pp. 585-587).
  A brief statement of this Black woman's view of the historical and current relationship between Black and white men and women.

- Ferguson, Renee. "Women's Liberation has a different meaning for Blacks" (pp. 587-592).
  A 1970 news article surveying the different responses of Black women to the women's movement.
- Murray, Pauli. "Jim Crow and Jane Crow" (pp. 592-599).
  Whereas Abubakari takes the position that Black women have nothing to do with women's liberation, Murray argues at greater length for the opposite view.
- Robinson, Patricia. "Poor Black women" (pp. 599-602).
  A class and dialectical analysis which may be difficult for students. Nevertheless, it is an important perspective which merits help from teachers to facilitate discussion.
- Chisholm, Shirley. "Facing the abortion question" (pp. 602-607).
  Chisholm discusses how her thinking on abortion changed, and how she feels abortion is an issue of great concern to poor Black women. She denies that abortion and family planning are genocide programs and points out that such claims make sense only to Third World men.
- Wright, Margaret. "I want the right to be Black and me" (pp. 607-608).
  A brief but biting look at Black women's role. This would make a good comparison to Abubakari; assigned as a pair, they would still not be very long.
- Hamer, Fannie. "It's in your hands" (pp. 609-614).
  Hamer's style applied to the relationship between Black and white women and between Black men and Black women. Ends with a beautiful story.

Seifer, Nancy. Nobody speaks for me! self-portraits of American working class women. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976. 477pp. Hardcover. $10.95.

This book is a compilation of oral histories of 10 working class women, "self-portraits of leaders, activists, doers in their communities around the country, women who are challenging the tired conventional stereotypes.... While their personal circumstances, jobs, neighborhoods, and ethnic backgrounds vary dramatically, each has struggled with concrete issues affecting her life and emerged a fighter.... Their attitudes, life-styles, and growing awareness...reveal the enormous potential of American women to change their lives and their country." (Book jacket).

- "Dorothy Bolden" (pp. 136-177).
  In the first section of this oral history, Dorothy Bolden, head of the Domestic Workers Union, describes

her years as a domestic worker in Atlanta. Despite this labor, she was actively involved in her six children's education. When the Civil Rights Movement hit Atlanta, Dorothy's natural organizing skills found a new outlet. Later she organized the maids of Atlanta with such success that a combination of government support and organizations like the Urban League have kept her going ever since. In the final pages, Ms. Bolden shows her ambivalent feelings about the women's movement.

Watkins, Mel and David, Jay, eds. To be a Black woman: portraits in fact and fiction. New York: Wm. Morrow and Co., Inc., 1970. 279pp. Hardcover. $6.95.

"An anthology of selections from historical and literary works. Depicts the lives of Black women in a white world, their self-images, and their relationships to Black and white men. Emphasizes the degrading aspects...accepts the Black matriarchy theory, and accuses Black women of castrating Black men. Very disappointing...." (Common Women Collective, Women in U.S. history, p. 28).

A large variety of selections which could be used in all historical periods. Use only selections with women protagonists -- no essays. Some selections reinforce image of Black women as emasculating.

- Carson, Josephine. "Sarah" (pp. 241-246). From Silent voices, annotated above.
- Horne, Lena. "I just want to be myself" (pp.103-112). Concerns Lena's advancement in the entertainment world in spite of the "whore" stereotype and the discrimination toward women. Selection shows her commitment to the Civil Rights Movement.

First-hand accounts: complete works

Bates, Daisy. The long shadow of Little Rock. New York: David McKay, 1962. 225pp. Hardcover. Out-of-print.

A very readable narrative of the dramatic events in Arkansas which became the focal point for the school integration struggle in 1957. The struggle is individualized as she describes day to day encounters and reveals how she, like many Black women, drew on a tradition of strength and courage to force change.

Chisholm, Shirley. Unbought and unbossed. New York: Avon Books, 1970. 191pp. Paper. $0.95.

The autobiography of the first Black Congresswoman, whose forthright style can be seen in these comments from the Introduction: "That I am a national figure because I was the first person in 192 years to be at once a congressman, Black and a woman proves, I would think, that our society is not yet either just or free." And: "Of my two 'handicaps,' being female put many more obstacles in my path than being Black." (pp. 11-12).

The chapters "Back to Brooklyn," "College years," and "Starting in business" (pp. 23-55) show Chisholm as a young woman helping Blacks and women organize politically. They also show important decisions she made at this crucial time in her life.

Giovanni, Nikki. Gemini. New York: Viking Compass, 1973. 149pp. Paper. $1.95.

"...A series of essays, which combine autobiography with commentary on issues ranging from Black literature and music to Vietnam and the case of Angela Davis. They are unified by the style and personality of the author -- direct, plainspoken, full of energy, anger, and love. Unlike Chisholm, Giovanni clearly identifies with her race before sex; her comments on Black women, white women, Black men, white men are deliberately provocative. Whether or not one agrees with them, she herself emerges as a pillar of strength." (Rosenfelt, ed., pp. 12-13).

- "On being asked what it's like to be Black" (pp. 24-33).
  Nikki Giovanni, a 25 year-old writer and poet, talks about her grandparents' and parents' effect on her life. She also discusses power in relationship to Black people. A humorous touch.

Guffy, Ossie. Ossie: the autobiography of a black woman. As told to Caryl Ledner. New York: Bantam Books, 1972. 214pp. Paper. $1.25.

Ossie begins her story with "I'm a woman, I'm Black...and I'm more of Black American than Ralph Bunche or Rap Brown or Harry Belafonte because I'm one of the millions who ain't bright, militant, or talented." Chapters 20 and 21 (pp. 192-213) are good reading for the Continuity and Change unit as Ossie gets involved in community organizing.

Jackson, Harrisene. There's nothing I own that I want. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974. 168pp. Hardcover. $5.95.

You may find chapters to assign as reading selections, but this is an easily read book that could be assigned in its entirety.

Ms. Jackson vividly depicts what it's like to be Black, female and penniless in the 1960's. Because she has five children to support, it seems that every opportunity she has to advance is blocked. Men become a liability to her as she repeatedly finds she can count on no one but herself. (Cf. Ossie).

Yet, Jackson has the quality of endurance. At the end she speaks to her mother, whom she saw killed: "So, for myself, my children, and especially for you, I hang in there and live this life of survival."

Moody, Anne. Coming of age in Mississippi. New York: Dell Laurel Editions, 1970. 384pp. Paper. $1.50.

"At once simple and eloquent, this is a moving account of a Black woman's experience growing up in the deep south of the forties and fifties. It has four sections: childhood, high school, college, and the movement. Moody tells of her involvement in the civil rights movement without melodrama; her dignity and quiet courage shine through the understated prose. An important book for young and old, Black and white." (Rosenfelt, ed., p. 16).

- "The movement" (pp. 262-384).
  Assign either the whole book or one of the chapers from this section. Anne Moody gives us the woman's viewpoint.

Fiction: selections

Washington, Mary Helen, ed. Black-eyed Susans: classic stories by and about Black women. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1975. 163pp. Paper. $2.95.

The introduction (ix-xxxii) provides excellent interpretations of the selections, which are deliberately arranged to progress from a brutal and unnecessary tragedy to a story of hope and promise. Along the way, they illustrate the themes of growing up Black and female, the intimidation of color, the Black woman and the myth of the white woman, the Black mother-daughter conflict, and the Black woman and the disappointment of romantic love.

- Brooks, Gwendolyn. "The self-solace" (pp. 45-50).
  One Black woman's reaction to the put-down of a white woman.
- Meriwether, Louise. "A happening in Barbados" (pp. 51-62).
  A beautiful and sophisticated Black woman on vacation in Barbados seeks her revenge on white women who, she says, are always trying to snatch Black men. When she succeeds, she sees she has been callous and vicious, using the woman's white skin as an excuse to justify her own humanity.
- Walker, Alice. "Everyday use" (pp. 78-90).
  A humorous piece about a young woman who returns to visit her mother and get her to "make something of herself."

- Marshall, Paule. "Reena" (pp. 114-138). Reena talks about her life of changes, from a college revolutionary, through her relationships with men, to her present feelings about her job, her children and her future. This selection touches all the themes in this unit. This short story is also found in Cade, and Watkins and David (both annotated above).
- Walker, Alice. "A sudden trip home in the spring" (pp. 141-154). Sarah's newly found consciousness makes her more aware of the necessity of keeping alive in herself a sense of the continuity with the past and her family.

Fiction: novels

Gaines, Ernest J. The autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. New York: Bantam Books, 1971. 246pp. Paper. $1.50.

"This novel purports to be the autobiography of a hundred-year-old Black woman as told to a young Black sociologist. It tells of her escape as a young girl from slavery, her long trek northward, her marriage, her eventual 'conversion' to Christianity -- events not recorded in the history books. Gaines makes Miss Jane so real, so alive, that many readers have accepted it as genuine autobiography. In any case, it is as much history as fiction." (Rosenfelt, ed., p. 29).

An appropriate selection for the whole African-American unit.

- "The quarters" (pp. 218-246). These last chapters show the effect of the Civil Rights Movement on one small community in Louisiana. Jane, who never had children, has been throughout the book a symbolic producer of men-leaders -- her husband Joe; Ned, the boy she raised; and now Jimmy, whom she helps raise along with other old people. She grasps his purpose and urgency about the movement and, at age 101, she ceases to bring forth leaders and becomes one.

Walker, Alice. Meridian. New York: Pocket Books, 1977. 220pp. Paper. $1.50.

Meridian is a girl who comes of age in the south during the civil rights struggle. Although in her teen years she is unconscious about the limits of freedom for herself and her race, it is clear that she is a non-conformist and a questioner who somehow never does things the "correct" way.

It is no surprise that she becomes a real crusader and returns to the south, after some years as a militant in the north, to live and work among her people -- long after it is "the thing" to do. Meridian's background, marriage, affairs and political persuasions are juxtaposed against those of the white woman, Lynne.

An important book. Students could be assigned selections from some of the early or late chapters.

Audiovisuals: films

Chisholm: pursuing the dream. n.d. Tom Denby and Bob Werner. Color. 42 minutes. $50 rental from New Line Cinema, 121 University Place, New York. 10003.

Especially good film to use in conjunction with reading Chisholm's autobiography. While the very fact that Chisholm ran a presidential campaign in 1972 indicates political change for Black women, there are many indications here of continued racism and sexism. Discussion should identify those scenes (e.g., when Black Panther endorsement is considered a political liability). Ask students also to discuss the relationship portrayed between Mrs. Chisholm and her husband.

A moving portrait of a strong, self-assured woman who is not afraid to be emotional as well as politically astute.

Going back. n.d. Color. 15 minutes. $12 rental from Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corporation Films, 425 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago 60611, or 2494 Teagarden Street, San Leandro, CA 94577.

Students who saw this film objected to its career education context, and we thought that the lead into the film was both sexist and inappropriately aimed at a young audience. Ask students to ignore this part as much as possible and focus on the content, which is rich for our purposes. The Black woman in this film was one of 18 children who helped their parents operate a tobacco farm. She began work as a nurses' aide, but felt she could do more. She was the first woman accepted in a physicians' assistant program. Near the end of this program, she had to decide whether to work in a large hospital or to go back to her rural area, which had no regular doctor. She explains what each option offers and why she chose to go back. It turns out to be the right choice for her; she is satisfied.

Discussion can center on expanded opportunities shown here: e.g., her grandmother would probably have no choice but to work on the farm all her life; her mother might have been able to become a nurses' aide;

she broke into a traditionally male realm. Further talk about the choice between working in a hospital and working in the community would be appropriate (more pay, better hours, learn very sophisticated medical techniques, spend more time with machines than people, always being supervised, vs. being in country, near family, close to many people, independent, variety). Point out that there is no right or wrong choice except as it is appropriate for the person making it. Students might not make the same choice, but whatever choices they do make should be equally satisfying.

I am somebody. 1970. Madeline Anderson. Color. 18 minutes. $30 rental from Contemporary/McGraw-Hill, 330 West 42nd Street, New York 10036.

A documentary about a successful strike of Black women hospital workers in Charleston, South Carolina, during 1969. Narrated by one of the strike leaders, the film shows how the Black community supported the strike by organizing effective boycotts and demonstrations. This strike reflects the economic impact of the Civil Rights Movement and shows how gaining economic power also gives a sense of personal power. Ask students to identify scenes which portray these relationships.

Students find this film very exciting.

Veronica. 1969. Pat Powell. Color. 27 minutes. $22 rental from Extension Media Center, 2223 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94720.

Veronica is a Black middle-class woman attending an integrated high school in New Haven, Connecticut. This film brings out the continued effects of racism and sexism in her life. Note how Veronica feels about being a beauty queen (she discounts its importance) in the Black community (she is embarrassed) and about being president of the student body in the school (she discounts having power). Her idol is a Black woman teacher who discounts racial prejudice (she always got a job if she was qualified) and who cannot sympathize with Veronica's feelings of insecurity as she tries to play out the role of successful, upwardly mobile young Black woman (the role which the teacher has played so well). Note also that the white men and even Veronica's Black boyfriend are self-assured. At the end we discover that Veronica is valedictorian of her class, but has decided to become a court reporter (where she sees herself having the same problems as in high school). Given the emotional strain on her, this is probably a good decision, but it definitely is a decision which makes sense only in a world where racism and sexism can produce such personal tension (notice how worried her mother is as she watches Veronica near the end of the film).

There are many possible points of discussion. Ask students to pick out the scenes which show the effects of racism and sexism.

Audiovisuals: videocassette

Black high school girls. 1970. Martha Stuart. Color. 28 minutes. 3/4" videocassette. $35 rental from Martha Stuart Communications, 66 Bank Street, New York 10014.

Students from an Upward Bound program in South Bend, Indiana, talk about their home town, their parents, their school and their view of life. Despite a somewhat awkward discussion leader and an occasionally on-screen microphone, this video production captures a spirit of change in confronting racism and offers a number of questions to explore. For example: is South Bend very different from the South? are the young women in this tape underestimating the tradition of resistance to oppression among their parents, or are their criticisms fair? has anything changed for Black women in school now as opposed to 1970? do you think that if these women gain more personal power in taking control of their education, they will also gain more economic and political power after they get out of school?

General overview: film

Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. 1974. John Korty. Color. 120 minutes. $80 rental from Extension Media Center, address above.

A strong and intelligent Black woman, played by Cicely Tyson, recalls her life experience, which spans the time from slavery to the Civil Rights Movement. Based on Ernest Gaines's fictionalized autobiography and especially worthwhile to use if your students are reading the book. A very powerful film which you and some of your students may have already seen once or twice on television.

Given the length and cost of this film, perhaps several classes could see this together and several departments share the cost.

Background Information for Teachers

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AN HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

AFRICAN-AMERICAN
CHINESE-AMERICAN

DATE	AFRICAN-AMERICAN	GENERAL U.S. HISTORY	CHINESE-AMERICAN
1607		Jamestown, Virginia colony founded	
1619	First African-Americans to James-town sold as indentured servants		
1620		Pilgrims land at Plymouth	
1661	Laws enacted in Virginia making slavery legal and hereditary through the mother	South Carolina advertisement in England promises women a "golden age" in the colonies	
1700	Plantation system fully established in Virginia, Maryland, Carolina	King William's War (1698-97);England and France struggle for hegemony in America	
1705	Virginia requires children of white women and Black men to serve as slaves for 31 years		
1714		Treaty of Utrecht: British empire strengthened and England becomes predominant influence in Americas	
1733	Slaves prohibited in new colony of Georgia as economically bad for poor white settlers		
1739	Cato's Revolt (slave revolt) in South Carolina; 60 slaves later executed	King George's War (1739-48); European powers fight in Europe with some concern for possession of colonies	
1749	Slavery legalized in Georgia		
1754	Quakers prohibit members from owning slaves		
1773	Slaves in Massachusetts petition legislature for freedom		
1775	5,000 free and slave African-Americans serve in Continental Army to fight against England	Revolutionary War (to 1781)	
1777	Vermont, first state to abolish slavery		
1784			Trade between China and U.S. using sailing ships
1787	Northwest Ordinance excludes slavery from Northwest territory	Philadelphia convention to write Constitution. Northwest Ordinance adopted	First record of Chinese on west coast of Canada; 70 carpenters
1788	Blacks are counted as 3/5 the population in states for tax and representation	U.S. Constitution ratified	
1790	74,000 slaves exported from Africa annually	Philadelphia is capital of U.S. First census taken	
1791		Bill of Rights ratified First textile mill built in Pawtucket, Rhode Island	

DATE	AFRICAN-AMERICAN	GENERAL U.S. HISTORY	CHINESE-AMERICAN
1793	First federal Fugitive Slave Act Growing cotton dependent on slavery system	Cotton gin invented	
1800		Textile industry in north grows, relying on southern cotton	
1803	African slave trade ended	Louisiana Territory bought	
1804		Lewis and Clark Expedition	
1808	Slave trade outlawed by U.S. Congress		
1812	Free African-Americans fight for United States in War of 1812	War of 1812 (to 1815): against British for right on sea, frontier and Canadian borders	
1820	Missouri Compromise: Missouri admitted as a slave state, Maine as a free state		
1823		Monroe Doctrine: opposes further acquisition of territory in America by European powers	
1826	143 emancipation societies in U.S.		
1829	Race riot in Cincinnati: 1,000 African-Americans flee city for Canada		
1831	Nat Turner slave insurrection	Beginning of new waves of immigration from Europe	
1839	Underground railroad helping slaves to escape north becomes well established	First ships cross Atlantic by steam. Irish immigrants (through 1850's)	Britain provokes Opium War with China
1844	John Quincy Adams tries to get Congress to discuss slavery question		U.S. treaty with China to permit Chinese residents in United States
1846		War with Mexico (to 1848)	
1848		First women's rights convention Mexico cedes the Southwest to U.S. Discovery of gold in California	First Chinese immigrants recorded in San Francisco
1850	Second Fugitive Slave Law: mandatory for all citizens to aid in recapturing slaves. Compromise of 1850: California admitted as a free state	North becomes a major manufacturing center. First tenements built, in New York City	Chinese begin work in mines First Chinese women arrive
1854	Kansas-Nebraska Act: reopens question of slaves in formation of these two new states	Gadsden Treaty: U.S. gets lands from Mexico to its border Migration west and hostilities with Indians	
1857	Dred Scott Decision: Supreme Court rules slaves and descendents (free or not) ineligible for citizenship	Business Panic	

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DATE	AFRICAN-AMERICAN	GENERAL U.S. HISTORY	CHINESE-AMERICAN
1858		Lincoln-Douglas debates	First California railroad employs Chinese
1860	4 million slaves in U.S.; 5,888,000 mulattoes estimated	The south secedes from the Union; Civil War (to 1865)	Foreigners permitted to recruit workers from China
1862		Homestead Act	
1863	Emancipation Proclamation New York draft riots, mainly against Blacks	First Union Army draft, unless one could pay $300. Gettysburg Address. National Banking System established	Chinese used as labor in manufacturing
1865	13th Amendment ratified; slavery abolished in U.S. Freedman's Bureau established to educate Black children	Surrender of General Lee Assassination of Lincoln Reconstruction Era (to 1877): attempts to rebuild south, protect rights of ex-slaves	Construction of Central Pacific railroad using 6,000 Chinese as labor force
1868	14th Amendment: citizenship to African-Americans	Many seek free land in west under Homestead Act of 1862	Burlingame Treaty: freedom of immigration for Chinese laborers
1869		Women's suffrage granted for first time - Wyoming Territory Immigration and foreign settlement of the west encouraged	Transcontinental Railroad completed at Utah: 15,000 Chinese employed
1874	Race conflicts and lynching in south	Corruption during President Grant's term uncovered Financial panic (1873-1878)	Chinese exclusively used to construct river levee and reclaim land in California
1877	Jim Crow Laws implement race separation throughout South	Last federal troops withdrawn from south	Anti-Chinese riots in San Francisco Joint congressional committee probes Chinese labor problems California Workingmen Party formed
1879	Exodus of 50,000 Blacks from south to north and west as riots and conflict continue	Era of unchecked industrial growth Homestead Act land in west attracts poor southerners, Black and white	
1882		650,000 foreigners arrive in eastern ports; greatest number of European immigrants in 19th century	First Chinese Exclusion Act; suspends entry of Chinese labor into U.S.
1885		Number of immigrants to U.S. rises until 1915	Rock Springs, Wyoming massacre: 28 Chinese slain
1890	African-Americans barred from polls in south Colored Women's League founded	End of frontier Sherman Anti-Trust Act	Raids against Chinese throughout the west
1892	Populist Party welcomes Black votes, breaks one party system in south	Populist Party; platform of moral and monetary reform Homestead steel and other strikes Depression (1893-96)	
1895	National Federation of Afro-American Women New Era Club for Black women in Boston		
1896	Plessy vs. Ferguson decision; Supreme Court upholds "separate but equal" policy National Association of Colored Women formed	Populists defeated; middle and upper class elect McKinley 7/8 of America's wealth controlled by 1/8 population Depression over	
1898		Spanish-American War Hawaii annexed	
1899		Puerto Rico, Guam, Phillipines ceded to U.S. at end of Spanish-American War (U.S. imperialism)	Chinese Exclusion Act applied to Hawaii. U.S. "Open Door" policy for China

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DATE	AFRICAN-AMERICAN	GENERAL U.S. HISTORY	CHINESE-AMERICAN
1908	Troops called in to quell race riot in Springfield, Illinois	U.S. Congress authorizes investigation of child and female labor	
1909	NAACP organized	Growth of cities; in major cities foreign-born outnumber native-born	
1911	Urban League formed		
1915			Manchu Dynasty deposed Chinese Republic established Chinese-American Citizens Alliance formed to protect civil rights
1917	371,000 African-Americans serve in armed forces. 10,000 march in New York City to protest lynchings and discrimination.	U.S. enters World War One (to 1919)	
1919	25 race riots in U.S. cities	End of World War One	
1920	Back-to-Africa movement holds convention in Harlem	19th Amendment; women's suffrage	61,689 Chinese in U.S.
1921		First immigration quotas	
1923	Estimated African-American migration from South: 500,000		
1924			Immigration Act: no Chinese women allowed to enter U.S. for permanent residence
1925	Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters organized 40,000 KKK members march on Washington, D.C.		Chinese-Americans begin participation in unions
1929	Martin Luther King Jr. born	Stock Market crash; Depression	
1933	President Roosevelt creates a "Black Cabinet" to advise him. African-Americans benefit from many New Deal recovery programs. NAACP files first educational discrimination suit	New Deal begins; federal relief for unemployed, farmers, businesses	
1935	National Council of Negro Women established. African-Americans join C.I.O. (Congress of Industrial Organizations)	Labor Relations Act: employees have right to bargain collectively and form unions	Chinese-Americans join C.I.O.
1937			Chinese Ladies Garment Workers organized
1938	Supreme Court rules that Black students may enter state colleges	Fair Labor Standards Act: child labor outlawed Social Security Act: creates new group, welfare families	Women strike against Dollar (garment) Store Mass picketing of ships bringing war materials to Japan
1941	892,078 African-Americans serve in segregated armed forces	Japan invades Pearl Harbor; U.S. enters World War II Fair Employment Practices Committee works to achieve equal work for minorities	Chinese-Americans fight in armed forces against Japan and Germany
1942	Congress of Racial Equality formed	Japanese-Americans evacuated to relocation centers Women find new jobs in war industries	

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DATE	AFRICAN-AMERICAN	GENERAL U.S. HISTORY	CHINESE-AMERICAN
1943	Race riot in Detroit	Invasion of Italy	Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 repealed
1946	Supreme Court bans segregated bus travel		Laws enacted to liberalize Chinese-Filipino immigration
1947		Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan	War Brides Act: enables 6,000 women married to Americans to enter U.S. from China
1949		U.S. joins North Atlantic Treaty Organization Cold War with Russia	Communist victory in China 3,916 Nationalist Chinese students enroll in U.S.
1950	All U.S. armed forces are integrated Supreme Court extends desegregation ruling to railroad dining cars	Korean Conflict (to 1953) McCarthyism, hunt for suspected Communists and "subversives"	McCarran Act: in a time of "internal security" any suspected person could be jailed; Chinese felt would be used against them
1954	Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka: Supreme Court outlaws segregation in schools		
1953			Refugee Relief Act: entry eases for refugees from Communist China
1955	Mrs. Rosa Parks and others boycott segregated bus seating in Montgomery, Alabama		
1956			San Francisco Grand Jury harasses Chinese organizations looking for possible Communists
1957	Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized School integration brings bombs and violence in south	Federal Civil Rights Commission created Civil Rights Act	
1960	African-American sit-in movement in Greensboro, N.C. Black nationalist Elijah Muhammed calls for creation of Black state	Space program expenditures Peace Corps begun Exodus of whites from big cities during last decade	
1962			Kennedy Directive; Hong Kong refugees to enter immediately as "parolees"
1963	March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom Medgar Evers assassinated	U.S. troop involvement in Vietnam (to 1973) Kennedy assassinated	China explodes Atomic Bomb
1964	Civil Rights Bill: federal power to protect voting rights Summer of voter registration in south	War on Poverty Program initiated Supreme Court orders reapportionment giving more power to suburbs and cities	
1965	Watts riots in Los Angeles Voters Rights Act enhances Black political power in south Elementary and Secondary School Act: money for desegregated schools. Malcolm X assassinated	Council of Equal Opportunity Medicare Women's Liberation Movement emerges Peace marches against Vietnam war	Immigration Revision Law: permits increase in number of Chinese from any part of world
1966	Stokely Carmichael leads Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to "Black Power" policy. Race riots in Chicago, Cleveland and other northern cities. U.S. Congress outlaws poll tax in all elections.		
1967	More African-Americans gaining high political office	National Welfare Rights Organization founded	

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DATE	AFRICAN-AMERICAN	GENERAL U.S. HISTORY	CHINESE-AMERICAN
1967	Open housing issue in north. Race riots in 75 U.S. cities	"Flower Children"; growth of counterculture	
1968	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated in Memphis Poor Peoples' March to Washington	"TET" offensive in Vietnam Student demonstration and outbreaks Riots at Democratic National nominating convention in Chicago	
1969	U.S. Department of Justice sues Georgia to end school segregation Shirley Chisholm first Black woman to serve in Congress	Apollo II on the moon Recession begins	Women testify before California Industrial Welfare commission about low pay and employer falsifying of time cards

Overview of Chinese-American Women:

Early Immigration and Adaptation

Nagat El-Sanabary
Carolyn Reese

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INTRODUCTION

The history and current situation of Chinese-American women are entwined with the history and current situation of all Chinese-Americans. Thus, it is crucial to examine what has happened to Chinese men as well as to women.

Chinese women have had to deal with both racism and sexism in the United States. Most Chinese women who emigrated left mainland China before the Communist revolution of 1949, which substantially changed the status of women in that society. Before the revolution, women were considered greatly inferior to men; traditional Chinese society was based on the doctrine that women should be subservient and display filial piety.

Chinese women came to a country that exploded with virulent anti-Chinese feeling in the late 19th century -- a country whose laws treated all Asian women like prostitutes. Stereotyping in America perpetuated the image of Asian women as submissive and passive, and as sex objects. The struggle of Chinese-American women to overcome these barriers is a testament to their strength.

Concepts to Define:

sojourner
immigration
mountain of gold
exclusion laws

TEACHER'S NOTE: It is helpful to start a timeline which the class may use throughout this unit. Begin with some of the major historical dates (discovery of gold in California, first Chinese to arrive in the United States, immigration laws, etc.) and add to the timeline as historical events are mentioned. Include events from women's experiences in other cultures -- for example, African-American women. If students do research on their ancestors, place the dates of relatives' immigrations or major migration dates on the line. (One class also included each student's birthdate.) A large line that extends across the wall is effective. The longer historical chronology for Chinese-American, General U.S. History and African-American events on pp. 501-506 will be especially helpful to you as background for this activity.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

China in 1850 was emerging from a decade of defeat in wars with other countries. Britain's victory in the Opium Wars (1840-1842) had humiliated the Manchu dynasty. Other foreign powers, supported by troops, were drawing wealth out of China to increase their own national assets.

Foreign imperialism took advantage of China's internal problems. A centuries-old feudal system still tied people to the land and to the control of landlords. Numerous clan feuds created upheaval, which allowed bandits to terrorize the peasantry.

To compound this situation natural disasters occurred. Severe droughts in 1847-1850 produced crop failures at the same time that the population was increasing. The dying Manchu dynasty, corrupted by Western powers, did nothing to stem China's decay.

Historian J. O'Meara reported that the first Chinese to arrive in the western U.S. were "merchants with beautiful silk, tea and objets d'art." The first Chinese immigrants, according to H. H. Bancroft, were two men and a woman who arrived aboard the Bard Eagle in 1848. The two men went directly to the mines and the woman went to work in the home of a missionary named Charles Gillespie, who had traveled on the same boat from Hong Kong.[1]

Stereotypes of Chinese

White attitudes toward the Chinese were stereotyped even before the Chinese migration to the U.S. began. American missionaries helped create an unfavorable image of the country, calling it a "land of darkness" where young women were "lured into the gates of Hell" to perform "abominable acts."[2]

Discovery of Gold

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 created a demand for cheap labor to mine it. America saw a potential source of this labor in China. U.S. business interests therefore began an aggressive campaign to recruit Chinese labor. In the streets of Canton, handbills were passed out that told of a life overseas where there was gold to be mined and enough jobs for everyone. The handbills also said that businessmen would pay the transportation costs through the "credit ticket system" -- workers would pay them back for the ticket, plus interest, only after they had started their jobs.

It was no wonder that by the 1850's, thousands of Chinese men heeded this call to the "mountain of gold," as America was called. Every family tried to send a man overseas. Whereas at the end of 1848 there were only seven Chinese registered in California, one year later there were more than 700. In 1851, there were 2,700 Chinese in California, and by 1852 there were 27,000 Chinese in the United States.[3]

Sojourners

Chinese men were "sojourners" who had dreams of returning to their villages and retiring to lives of leisure as landlords. But the reality was that only some bachelors returned to marry, only a few returned wealthy, and most never earned enough money to leave America. Many who did have the money to return decided to stay. These men lived in the western United States, most often in California, for the rest of their lives.

From the moment he stepped off the boat, usually already in debt because of the cost of his fare, the Chinese immigrant faced a life close to that of a slave laborer. The "credit ticket system" was only a mild version of the exploitation he experienced. In 1852, California State Senator Tingley attempted to pass a bill that would allow Chinese workers to sell themselves into bondage for periods of up to ten years. The bill did not pass, but it was one of many attempts to bring large groups of Chinese to America with the status of identured servants.[4]

By 1852, many Chinese had begun to work as miners. In addition, when boom towns grew up around the mines the Chinese were quickly enlisted to do the domestic work in the towns. The attitude of Americans toward Chinese quickly changed from tolerance to hostility, as this writer demonstrates:

> The gold mines were preserved by nature for Americans only, who possess noble hearts and are willing to share with their fellow men more than any other race of men on earth, but still, they do not wish to give all. We will share our interest in gold mines with none but American citizens.[5]

As a consequence of this sort of reaction, a foreign miner's tax was levied; millions of dollars were collected from Chinese miners between 1850 and 1870.

Despite the obstacles, by 1870 the Chinese made up a majority of miners in California. The Chinese who worked for themselves usually took over mines that had been abandoned as unprofitable. They worked as far north as Canada and as far east as Idaho and Montana. Their mining projects were often large and impressive in terms of engineering techniques and teamwork.[6]

Work on the Railroads

In the mid-1860's Charles Crocker decided to use Chinese miners as workers on his railroads. This proved so successful that he soon recruited thousands of Chinese directly from Canton. At the height of the construction of the Central Pacific Railway, nine out of ten workers were Chinese. Railroad construction was dangerous work and loss of life was common. In some places, workers were lowered from a cliff in wicker baskets to drill holes and insert gunpowder; the workers then had to hoist themselves up quickly before the gunpowder exploded. Working from sunrise to sunset on the railroads, the Chinese endured extreme temperatures and inclement weather -- all for $26 a month. In 1867, thousands struck in an attempt to get the same treatment as white men. They asked for a workday of eight hours, no whipping, and the right to leave and look for work elsewhere. The strike collapsed within a week. Excluded from American society, Chinese workers did not have the broad-based support necessary for a successful strike. Still, the myth of passivity had been shaken.[7]

Other Labor Contributions

From the 1860's to the 1890's, many Chinese workers were employed to develop agriculture, primarily in California, where land reclamation was a major priority. Chinese labor transformed marginal land into expensive farm acreage. The Chinese also traveled up and down the coast as migrant workers.

Through their own hard work, they established fishing colonies, producing crab, abalone, shrimp and sturgeon both for local sale and for export. Yet, they were forced to pay a heavy tax on all their fishing activities.

Early manufacturing in the West also required cheap labor. In the 1860's, woolen mills, and sewing, shoe and cigar factories were able to exist because Chinese labor was available. As one mill owner admitted: "Without Chinese labor, we could have never competed with the cheap child and women labor of the East."[8]

"The Chinese Must Go"

The employment situation in the West did not remain favorable to the Chinese for long. With the completion of the transcontinental railroad, massive waves of European immigrants surged West. Many people also left the East because of an economic depression in the 1870's. The gold mines were collapsing and employment on the railroad was diminishing. Wherever white men looked for jobs, they saw Chinese laborers working. Aggravated by the media, the unions, business and government, racial feeling against the Chinese soon exploded. In 1873, the San Francisco Chronicle wrote:

> Who have built a nest of iniquity and rottenness in our very midst? The Chinese. Who filled our workshops to the exclusion of white labor? The Chinese. Who drives away white labor by their stealthy but successful competition? The Chinese.[9]

A fiery orator, Denis Kearny, formed and led the Workingman's Party. Kearny coined the slogan "the Chinese must go" and anti-Chinese terrorism soon followed. Throughout the 1870's, 1880's and 1890's, riots drove Chinese from farms, mines, factories and communities. Twenty-two Chinese, including women and children, were lynched in Los Angeles in 1871. All Chinese homes and businesses were destroyed in Denver in 1880. The worst massacre happened in Rock Springs, Wyoming, when 28 Chinese were murdered after an anti-Chinese meeting held in the "Whitemen's Town" section of Rock Springs.

The Exclusion Laws

Coinciding with these terrorist acts were anti-Chinese laws passed on county, state and national levels. These regulations ranged from social, economic and legal restrictions to a prohibition on immigration. (See page 571 for a listing of these laws.)

As already mentioned, as soon as the Chinese began to arrive in California during the Gold Rush, legislation was passed to tax them and limit their freedoms. As early as 1848, a regulation in Mariposa County prohibited the Chinese from mining. At the state level, a Bond Act required all Chinese arriving in California after 1852 to post a $500 bond.[10] The Chinese Exclusion Act of May 8, 1882 banned the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years (although teachers, students, merchants and travelers were exempt). In 1892, this act was extended for another ten years; in 1904, the exclusion of Chinese laborers was extended indefinitely.[11]

Even after most of California's gold had been mined out, discriminatory laws against the Chinese who wanted to enter the U.S. continued in effect for many years. Existing exclusion laws were amended to be more restrictive in 1911, 1912, 1913 and 1917.

The 1924 Immigration Act

A new immigration law dealt another blow to the creation of a viable Chinese-American community. The Immigration Act of 1924 prohibited the immigration of all Chinese women for the purpose of permanent residence. It also prohibited American-born Chinese men from marrying an alien Chinese woman and bringing her to the U.S. In view of the small number of Chinese women in the U.S., the 1924 law meant that many men were condemned to an unmarried status. During the next five years, not a single Chinese woman entered California to live, and the number of men who returned to China was greater than those who entered looking for work.[12] (A complete listing of legislation that affected Chinese in the U.S. is on page 571.)

In states with significant Chinese populations anti-miscegenation acts (laws against mixed marriages) prevented Chinese men from marrying into the white population.

The harsh immigration act was revised in 1930 to allow the admission of Chinese wives of American citizens who had been married prior to May 26, 1924. From 1931 to 1940, an average of 60 Chinese women entered the U.S. each year. But Chinese immigration continued to be limited until 1943, when the exclusion laws were repealed.[13]

First Women Immigrants

In 1880, 71,000 out of 75,000 Chinese immigrants in San Francisco were male. By 1890, there were only 3,868 Chinese women in the U.S. compared to 103,620 men. The number of women had decreased due to high death rates.

The factors contributing to this situation were complex. Americans wanted to make only temporary use of Chinese labor and families were therefore actively discouraged from entering the United States. The Chinese, too, wanted to return to China. Since the unity of the family was of high importance to the Chinese immigrants, they looked upon the presence of their wives in China as an incentive to return home. (To understand the importance of the family in Chinese society, recall the unit on Women in China.)

Of the few women immigrants, most did not come voluntarily, but were brought to America to be turned into prostitutes. They became part of a lucrative business that fed off the needs of a male community. There was a high mortality rate among these women. Ironically, the laws in the 1880's which were camouflaged as anti-prostitution measures restricted the immigration of Chinese women.

The rigors of frontier life and anti-Chinese terrorism led to a similarly high mortality rate among the few wives and daughters who immigrated to the U.S.

The obstacles to the establishment of family life began to change with the immigration laws passed after 1930. Women began to enter the United States and the number of families slowly began to increase. Chinatown in San Francisco gradually shifted from a society of bachelors to a society of merchant families. The population of American-born Chinese women -- first-generation Chinese-Americans -- grew slowly and contributed to the proliferation of families.[14] Today, Chinatown still consists of three societies: the "bachelor society" of immigrant male laborers, the small business-centered "family society," and the new working-class society of people who have immigrated since 1965.[15]

The following sections are sub-divided into Early Immigration and Adaptation. We will examine the lives of Chinese women who emigrated from China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in terms of the degree of personal, economic, and political power they possessed. We will discuss the effects of the U.S. exclusion laws on Chinese-American women and their families. Finally, we will look at the identity crises that many Chinese-Americans experienced during the process of adaptation to American culture.

TEACHER'S NOTE: First-generation Chinese-Americans are children of Chinese immigrants; second-generation are children of first-generation Chinese-Americans, etc. It is important to remember that Chinese are still immigrating to the U.S., and these families repeat the pattern of first-second-third generation changes as they absorb American culture.

PERSONAL POWER

Focus Questions:

In looking for spheres of power in the personal lives of Chinese-American women, see if they have control over

- *the use of their bodies;*
- *the people to whom they relate;*
- *when and where to travel;*
- *whom they marry;*
- *whether or not to have children;*
- *ending a bad marriage;*
- *where they live.*

Early Immigration

As used throughout this curriculum, personal power refers to a woman's control over the use of her own body, and her freedom to make choices about whom to associate with, whom to marry, whether or not to marry, where to live, whether to travel or not, etc.

Judging by the above criteria, we find that early Chinese women immigrants had very little or no personal power. Their position was not much better than that of poor Chinese women in feudal China and often it was worse, since they could not associate with other women from their extended families or villages. Most of the first women immigrants became isolated in an alien society that did not recognize their existence, or viewed them as sub-human or degraded human beings -- an attitude reflected in the exclusion laws that separated the Chinese woman from her family and forced her to stay behind in China awaiting a husband or a son whom she might never see again. These women who were left behind will be discussed later in this overview, after we have examined the situation of the few Chinese women who came to the U.S. in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

Prostitution

Some of the women who came to the U.S. had been sold by their families and were forced into prostitution as soon as they landed in San Francisco. As early as 1852, several hundred Chinese prostitutes had arrived by ship from Hong Kong. Most of these women were not originally prostitutes, but had been sold to men in Hong Kong who later forced them into prostitution. There was a lot of money to be made in the business, which was controlled and run by men, and "was an inevitable sequel to the excess of males in America's Chinatowns."[16]

By 1885, there were an estimated 70 brothels in San Francisco's Chinatown, and trade in women had reached the proportions of a major business. "Girls were sold from the houses as concubines, and sometimes resold...girls were sold as domestic servants for $100 to $500 each and for prostitution purposes for $1,500 to $3,000 depending on age and appearance."[17]

Rather than assist these women, Californians helped exploit them. It was a felony to force white women into prostitution, but it was merely a misdeameanor to do the same to Asian women. The life expectancy of a prostitute was short. A "girl" was not allowed to refuse a customer, even if he was obviously diseased. Most died young, enslaved till their deaths.

Partly because of the stereotypic attitudes towards Chinese women that American missionaries had perpetrated even before immigration, Chinese women were exploited sexually in America because they were believed to be sexually depraved. The Chinese are "lustful and sensual in their dispositions; every female is a prostitute of the basest order" declared the New York Tribune in 1854.[18]

To complete the vicious combination of racism and sexism, the existence of Chinese prostitutes was used as an excuse to pass new legislation in the 1880's restricting the immigration of all Chinese women.

> ...It is claimed by both civil and medical authorities that both Chinese men and women were afflicted with venereal disease to an uncommon degree. The Chinese prostitutes were accused of luring young boys into their houses and of infecting them with the disease. A medical journal charged that the blood stream of the Anglo-Saxon population was being poisoned through the American men, who, "by thousands nightly," visited these resorts. [19]

In the 1890's, the Presbyterian missionaries Margaret Culbertson and Donaldina Cameron led raids to free the Chinese prostitutes and took them to mission shelters to convert them to Christianity.

"Lilac Chen, 84" in Longtime Californ' describes the slavery and prostitution women were forced to endure in San Francisco's Chinatown.

> And that worthless father, my own father, imagine, had every inclination to sell me, and he sold me on the ferry boat. Locked me in the cabin while he was negotiating my sale. And I kicked and screamed and screamed and they wouldn't open the door till after some time, you see, I suppose he had made his bargain and had left the steamer...
>
> This woman who brought me to San Francisco, was called Mrs. Lee, and she kept the biggest dive in San Francisco Chinatown. Oh, she had a lot of girls, slave girls, you know. And every night, seven o'clock, all these girls were dressed in silk and satin, and sat in front of a big window, and the men would look in and choose their girls who they'd want for the night. Of course, I didn't know anything, never heard about such things, you know. And when police or white people came, they always hid me under the bed and pushed a trunk in front of me and then after the police had left they let me come out again. And I saw these girls all dressed in silk and satin, and they were waiting for their business, see. But I didn't know anything. 20

COMPARISON: African-American women were used as "breeders," mistresses and prostitutes during slavery. The violation of the body of a Black woman was not considered a crime since they were considered to be personal possessions. Slave women and children were also often sold for profit, resulting in the destruction of family ties.

Compare and contrast the position of Chinese prostitutes in America with the situation of Black women in slavery. Discuss why it was considered permissable for a white man to abuse an African-American or Chinese-American women, while the harshest punishment, including lynching, was inflicted on an African-American man accused of raping a white woman.

The same double standard still occurs today with the women who are prostitutes being blamed and punished while the men of all races who exploit them are not made to suffer any consequences.

Early Immigrant Families

Chinese wives who came to America at the turn of the century endured many hardships. Life in the undeveloped mining towns was hard, and the women were disappointed by it, as a woman who was married by proxy to a Chinese immigrant in Butte, Montana, reveals:

> "A month later, I sailed for America with my husband's relative, a distant clan cousin. My aunt and relatives parted with me, tearfully. They said, 'Bring your children home so we may see them.' I promised them I would. My father had gone back to the village so I never saw him again. I was now a member of another family.
>
> I stayed in my state-room all through the journey and my meals were served there. Occasionally, the cousin would come and ask if I was well taken care of and how I was getting along.
>
> On the day that the steamer docked at Port Townsend, the cousin came to escort me on deck. Standing beside me at the rail, he pointed to a man walking up and down the wharf. He said, 'See that man smoking a big cigar? He is your husband.'
>
> After I landed and my luggage was transported to the railroad station, my husband and I rode to my new home, Butte, Montana. Here I have lived most of my life, raising my seven children after their father died."

> The informant told of the extreme hardships in adjusting to the mining camp when she arrived in 1900. Most Americans believe China to be "underdeveloped." At that time, the Western States left much to be desired. The informant came from a civilization several thousand years old and from one of the most modern cities in the world, Hong Kong. She left an upper middle-class urban family, living in comparative comfort, to settle in a Western city that boasted few conveniences. The climate was extremely cold. Water was pumped from a well and this froze in the winter. She had to pump and carry all the water used in the home. The house she lived in was a tumbledown, wooden shack.
>
> Her finery -- embroidered clothes, slippers, jewelry and articles of personal adornment -- was out of keeping with the undeveloped frontier. Her bound feet hampered her movements. She spoke no

English and at that time, Chinese custom forbade women venturing out. When her husband's male relatives came occasionally to enlist her support in family matters, she had to be forewarned so she could be properly attired and groomed to receive them. She went visiting once a year, at New Year. It was not until her children were grown and they took her uptown to see the stores that she knew what Butte looked like. This informant tersely and aptly phrased her first years of life in Butte: a prisoner for over ten years in a land that was hailed for its individual freedom. Finally, she heard that China had become a republic and women were unbinding their feet and going abroad. She unbound her feet -- a painful experience never to be forgotten -- a symbolic act of personal emancipation. She discarded most of the Chinese dresses she had and began to acquire a western wardrobe. This gesture of liberation met with her husband's stern disapproval, but she persisted. She went about the city making friends, and became a well-known personage.

Being uneducated, she could not write letters to her family. Letters grew more and more infrequent. Her husband was too preoccupied with his business affairs to write letters. He only did so when he sent his aging father-in-law money to defray living expenses, a promise he made during the pre-nuptial arrangements.

The wife was never able to keep her promise to her relatives in the way she envisioned it: a return to China with her husband and children, so that his and her relatives could see them as a family unit. The husband died after arrangements for the entire family's return to China were completed. Despite the intervention of fate, the widow decided to bury her husband in his home village, thereby "bringing the husband home." The children went to China and became acquainted with the parents' relatives. 21

DISCUSSION:

Do you suppose this woman had any choice when it came to selecting a marital partner?

Imagine what the feelings of this woman might have been during the first few months she lived in Butte, Montana. Describe what you think she felt.

How did her new life differ from the life of her family in China?

What influences (personal preferences? new cultural beliefs?) prompted her to unbind her feet, change her attire and "go abroad"? Would these actions qualify as an example of a woman exercising control over her own body?

How did her husband react to her new display of freedom? How did his reactions affect her?

In what ways was this woman traditional?

Detention at Angel Island

Because of the heavy restrictions on immigration, some women had no choice but to buy false papers and enter the U.S. illegally in order to join their husbands. All immigrants, therefore, were suspected of entering illegally. Every Chinese immigrant landing in America between 1909 and 1949 was detained on Angel Island, in San Francisco Bay, for interrogation and processing.[22] Some people remained there for as little as two weeks while others were detained for as long as three to four years, when cases were delayed pending appeal to Washington. The center, "nominally a 'quarantine station' to clear all immigrants from the Pacific, ... in fact, served to detain Chinese travelers for indefinite periods of time."[23]

An 86-year-old woman interviewed recently by Genny Lim and Judy Yung recounts her experience of detention on Angel Island:

> I arrived in Angel Island in 1922. I was thirty-three years old then. At the time, I was a school teacher in my village. I had just finished the three day examinations at the end of the school semester.
>
> My husband had been in business here for over ten years. There was no trouble getting here. The only thing was that I had to stay on the island for two weeks or so. It was okay, only real big. One big hall and rows of bunks. At the time, I had my first son with me. First son slept on the upper bunk; I slept on the lower bunk. He was fourteen at the time, still a kid. As a rule children and women lived in separate quarters on Angel Island.

There were a lot of Japanese. They arrived and left on ship within 24 hours. But us, we were confined inside so long, I kept thinking in my heart, "what a worthless trip coming here! Confined all the time -- it is just like being in jail." Had I known it was like this, I never would have wanted to come. 24

TEACHER'S NOTE: Ask students to think about this woman's experience in terms of personal power. Given her age and education and her husband's length of time and position in America, would she expect to be treated in this way? What effect would this experience have on her and others? What message was communicated to her. (You are suspect, deserving of quarantine, powerless.)

Adaptation

The immigration experience clearly affected Chinese-American women in many different ways. Older women born in China adhered to many traditional Chinese values, since responsibility for perpetuating the culture was placed on the woman. Many wanted their children to cling to these values too. Being the carrier of the culture was one way for a Chinese immigrant woman to maintain a sense of personal power *vis-à-vis* her husband and children. The men also continued to espouse traditional values, since most of them had immigrated to the United States before the revolutionary changes.

However, most Chinese-Americans were influenced by American life regardless of their degree of attachment to their traditional values. In the new environment, without pressures from family and village associates, women were able to cast away some of the restrictions on their personal and economic power. Young Chinese-American women enjoyed greater personal power than their Chinese-born mothers. Fostered by exposure to the American values of personal choice, this new personal power also coincided with changes in women's position in China.

But among the younger-generation American-born Chinese, exposure to two sets of values caused conflicts in some instances, especially in young people who wanted to emulate the values of white Americans. American-born children often disagreed with their parents' way of doing things. These ways included the preferential treatment of sons, the greater value placed on the education of males as compared to females, the continued practice of arranged marriages, and the parents' insistence that children learn Chinese language and culture in special schools.

We must stress, however, that it is extremely difficult and inadvisable to make any generalization about the experiences of Chinese-Americans. Instead, one must recognize the diversity of Chinese-American life styles, which are affected by the background of the family in China, the socioeconomic status a family had attained, and the varied influences of life in different parts of the U.S. The following experiences of some Chinese-American women should not be taken as an indication of the situation of all Chinese-Americans.

Change of Power Within Family

Although immigrant families functioned according to traditional Chinese values, which placed women in a subordinate position to men, women nevertheless assumed more authority and power within their families in America than they could have in China. They often worked with their husbands in the family business. Virginia Lee, B. L. Sung, and Jade Snow Wong all give accounts of the subtle changes that began to take place in family relationships in America.

> Fay was no longer the quiet, soft-spoken, shy bride. She was now a woman who held her ground firmly in matters she thought important to her family, especially those which concerned her children. She had had no voice in the choice of the marriage partner chosen for her by her family. In her early days in San Francisco, the strange country, the new husband she was as yet unfamiliar with, and a natural desire to show respect to Grandfather Kwong by behaving with decorum had combined to make her withdrawn and retiring. Now her voice was beginning to be heard more and more as each of these elements disappeared and as the responsibilities of her home and children increased. But always it was a voice with the tone of a jade bell, not brass. And she never ruled so much with an iron hand as she did with a porcelain hand, a hand that never struck too hard, for she knew that if it did it would not only damage itself but also the object it struck. 25

DISCUSSION:

What factors contributed to the change in Fay's personality?

What was the manner or style she used in exercising her newly acquired power? ("She ruled with a porcelain hand," her voice had the tone of "a jade bell, not brass.")

The following examples further illustrate the factors that contributed to greater personal power for women and the ways women used their newly acquired power.

> ...The father is the undisputed head of the household. He makes the decisions, manages the finances, and expects unquestioned obedience from both his wife and children. If the wife and children are recent arrivals from China, but the father has lived in this country for some years, he is their contact and link with the outside world. Though his English may be broken and his knowledge of American ways shallow, still the family is entirely dependent upon him in such daily occurrences as going to the store for food and clothing. As their dependence upon the father is great, his authority is respected.
>
> The wife, to all appearances, occupies a subordinate position to her husband. But [because of] the scarcity of women and the fact that the main livelihood of the Chinese is small service enterprises in which the wife is also a working partner, she quickly assumes a status higher than her traditional role in China. Her share in keeping the family unit going is invariably greater than her husband's, for she is also expected to assume the entire burden of housekeeping and childrearing as well as help in the family business. The wife is usually the first to rise in the morning, and she will be rinsing diapers and mopping floors long after the labors of the husband have ceased. It follows then that the women will be given a greater voice in making the decisions that affect the family. The husband may hold the purse, but more likely than not, the wife will decide how its contents will be spent. 26

Another Chinese-American writer describes the power her Chinese-born mother possessed in her family.

> It is generally believed that in a typical oriental family the mother is secondary and unimportant, she being submissive and weak. But this is not the case in our family. Mother was always the all-important mate of her husband. She was decidedly the ruling agent in the family, for father was too busy attending to his business (he was a merchant and had little time to devote to the family). 27

Most women used their authority very subtly, making decisions but allowing their husbands to voice them as their own.

> He had come to her for a solution, she knew, and now he waited for her to speak. But to her distress, she had no solution, knowing only that if she had she would have presented it to him. He would then think her words over and present it in his own words as if he had thought it up. She would then agree, not saying that it had been her idea; how well she knew that a man liked to think himself the master of the house! 28

Daughters and Sons

Some Chinese-American daughters raised in traditional families were disappointed at the preferential treatment which was conferred on their brothers from the moment of birth and continued throughout their lives. As in traditional China, the birth of a son was an occasion for elaborate celebration, but the birth of a daughter was an occasion for silence. Jade Snow Wong was disappointed at age seven to learn that the big festivities that accompanied the birth of her younger brother were not accorded her or her younger sister.

> The Wong family had never before seen such merrymaking, and Jade Snow enjoyed all the excitement. Just one remark she had heard, however, marred the perfect celebration, and remained in her mind as she lay in bed after the guests had departed. It was something she had heard her older sister say to the other while she was helping them twist the paper hangings.
>
> "The joyfulness springs from the fact that the child is at last a son, after three daughters born in the fifteen years between Blessing from Heaven and him. When Jade Precious Snow was born before him, the house was quiet. There was no such display."
>
> Under the comfortable warmth of her covers, Jade Snow turned over restlessly, trying to grasp the full meaning of that remark. Forgiveness From Heaven, because he was a brother, was more important to Mama and Daddy than dear baby sister, Precious Stone, who was only a girl. But even more uncomfortable was the realization that she herself was a girl and, like her younger sister, unalterably less significant than the new son in their family. 29

Maxine Hong Kingston grew up with the same inadequate feeling for being born female and not receiving the preferential treatment accorded her brother.

> My American life has been such a disappointment.
>
> "I got straight A's, Mama."
>
> "Let me tell you a true story about a girl who saved her village."
>
> I could not figure out what was my village. And it was important that I do something big and fine, or else my parents would sell me when we made our way back to China. In China there were solutions for what to do with little girls who ate up food then threw tantrums. You can't eat straight A's.
>
> When one of my parents or the emigrant villagers said, "Feeding girls is feeding cowbirds," I would thrash on the floor and scream so hard I couldn't talk. I couldn't stop.
>
> "What's the matter with her?"
>
> "I don't know. Bad, I guess. You know how girls are. 'There's no profit in raising girls. Better to raise geese than girls.'"
>
> "I would hit her if she were mine. But then there's no use wasting all that discipline on a girl. 'When you raise girls, you're raising children for strangers.'"
>
> "Stop that crying!" my mother would yell. "I'm going to hit you if you don't stop. Bad girl! Stop!" I'm going to remember never to hit or scold my children for crying, I thought, because then they will only cry more.
>
> "I'm not a bad girl," I would scream. "I'm not a bad girl. I'm not a bad girl." I might as well have said, "I'm not a girl."
>
> "When you were little, all you had to say was 'I'm not a bad girl,' and you could make yourself cry," my mother says, talking-story about my childhood.
>
> I minded that the emigrant villagers shook their heads at my sister and me. "One girl -- and another girl," they said, and made our parents ashamed to take us out together. The good part about my brothers being born was that people stopped saying, "All girls," but I learned new grievances. "Did you roll an egg on my face like that when I was born?" "Did you have a full-month party for me?" "Did you turn on all the lights?" "Did you send my picture to Grandmother?" "Why not? Because I'm a girl? Is that why not?" "Why didn't you teach me English?" "You like having me beaten up at school, don't you?"
>
> "She is very mean, isn't she?" the emigrant villagers would say.

"Come children. Hurry. Hurry. Who wants to go out with Great-Uncle?" On Saturday mornings my great-uncle, the ex-river pirate, did the shopping. "Get your coats, whoever's coming."

"I'm coming. I'm coming. Wait for me."

When he heard girls' voices, he turned on us and roared, "No girls!" and left my sisters and me hanging our coats back up, not looking at one another. The boys came back with candy and new toys. When they walked through Chinatown, the people must have said, "A boy -- and another boy -- and another boy!" At my great-uncle's funeral I secretly tested out feeling glad that he was dead -- the six-foot bearish masculinity of him ...

It was said, "There is an outward tendency in females," which meant that I was getting straight A's.

And all the time I was having to turn myself American-feminine, or no dates.

There is a Chinese word for the female I -- which is "slave." Break the women with their own tongues!

I refused to cook. When I had to wash dishes, I would crack one or two. "Bad girl," my mother yelled, and sometimes that made me gloat rather than cry. Isn't a bad girl almost a boy?

"What do you want to be when you grow up, little girl?"

"A lumberjack in Oregon."

Even now, unless I'm happy, I burn the food when I cook. I do not feed people. I let the dirty dishes rot. 30

TEACHER'S NOTE: Both Wong and Kingston had Chinese-born mothers. Their experiences are not necessarily the same as those of daughters of other Chinese families in different circumstances.

DISCUSSION:

What experiences led both Wong and Kingston to question the traditional Chinese value placed on girls? What made them believe that they were worth more than that?

What are indications in Kingston's excerpt that she was experiencing conflict between Chinese and American values?

Education

Education is often a key to greater personal, as well as economic and political power. Since the early immigration period, Chinese-American families struggled to provide their children with a good education, but racist practices prevented them from doing so. In the early period, there were very few Chinese children to be educated, since there were very few families among the early arrivals. Nevertheless, the segregation of educational facilities during the late 19th century and early 20th affected Chinese children as it affected African-American children: both were denied equal access to education with white children.

In some instances, a Chinese child would be admitted to a white school. But when more Chinese wanted to make use of this privilege, attempts were made to bar them completely from public education. Many Chinese parents accepted exclusion, but in 1924, a Chinese grocer living in Rosedale, Mississippi, went to court when his daughter was denied admission to a white public school. The case ultimately went to the Supreme Court and became a part of the infamous post-Plessy decisions upholding segregation. The struggle is recounted in the following excerpt.

> Gong Lum, a Chinese merchant with considerable standing in the white community in Rosedale, had two daughters. Both were born in Bolivar County and attended white Sunday School. Martha, the older, "had been admitted to the public school for whites along with others of her race." But, "at the noon recess (of opening day in October, 1924), she was notified by the superintendent that she would not be allowed to return."
>
> Her father hired an established Clarksdale law firm, Brewer, Brewer, and McGhehee, and filed suit on October 28, 1924, against the trustees of the Rosedale Consolidated High School. His lawyers pointed out: "She is not a member of the colored race nor is she of mixed blood, but that she is pure Chinese...(Furthermore) there is no school maintained in the District for the education of children of Chinese descent." Therefore, they

> argued that separate but equal facilities were not provided for her, nor was she allowed to utilize white facilities. Their arguments were persuasive and the Mississippi Circuit Court for the First Judicial District of Bolivar County decided in her favor, whereupon the school officials appealed to the Mississippi Supreme Court.
>
> The state Supreme Court reversed the decision, citing the 1890 Mississippi Constitution, "Separate schools shall be maintained for children of the white and colored races," and asserting that Chinese are not "white" but must fall under the heading, "colored races." Lum and his attorneys, now joined by a second firm, J. N. Flowers, appealed to the United States Supreme Court. Brewer and Flowers constructed a hard-hitting argument. They boldly asserted that it was a known fact that the white race was the "law-making race" in Mississippi and that it created special schools for itself to avoid mixing with Negroes: "If there is danger in the association (with Negroes), it is a danger from which one race is entitled to protection just the same as another.... The white race creates for itself a privilege that it denies to other races; exposes the children of other races to risks and dangers to which it would not expose its own children. This is discrimination." Their reasoning was explicitly equalitarian; although good use was made of the white racist rationale for segregated schools, this assumption was never accepted by them but merely used as a basis for argument.
>
> The Supreme Court, at its lowest ebb in racial decision-making, accepted that rationale, agreeing with the Mississippi Supreme Court: "It has been at all times the policy of the lawmakers of Mississippi to preserve the white schools for members of the Caucasian race alone." 31

Since Chinese families were driven into isolated communities that came to be called "Chinatowns" in a few major American cities, most Chinese-American children attended public schools located in these Chinatowns or in nearby communities. These schools were predominantly Chinese. For instance, in San Francisco Chinatown, most elementary public schools in the vicinity were 95 percent Chinese; junior and senior high schools were more integrated.

In addition to enrolling in public schools, most Chinese-American children attended private schools where they could learn Chinese language and culture. Many still attend these schools after the regular school day is over to learn writing, reading and speaking skills. It is usually immigrant and first-generation parents who insist that their children attend Chinese school to keep alive their Chinese culture; however, the burden of studying two cultures and maintaining grades with two homework loads is tremendous and by junior high school, most children persuade their parents to let them drop their Chinese studies and devote their energies to American school.

Attendance at both schools is symbolic of the duality of the lives of first- and second-generation Chinese-Americans. Many accounts by women of these generations describe feelings of conflict, since the values of the two cultures that influence them are often in opposition. Although they are from both cultures, they often feel they belong to and are accepted by neither. Often daughters of strict traditional families envied the freedom of American girls. Chinese-American girls might be forbidden to attend a school or church dance, for example, "...because (parents) consider it immoral and unmaidenly for a young girl to allow herself to be held in a man's arms in a public place."[32] Sometimes stylish or frilly clothes were also considered immodest and unnecessary.

Although Chinese-Americans made many efforts to secure equal access to education for their children, they generally attached greater importance to the education of sons rather than daughters, especially where the parents were poor and uneducated and held traditional values regarding the status of women and their education. The experience of Jade Snow Wong is illuminating in this regard. Although her father emphasized the importance of education, he chose to educate his son when forced to decide which child should receive further training. Jade Snow Wong, however, believed in the value of education for her, and she made a major decision that had a great impact on her life. We have a glimpse of the dilemma that faced her when she wanted to pursue higher education, in the following excerpt from her autobiography, Fifth Chinese Daughter.

> "Education is your path to freedom," Daddy had said. "In China you would have had little private tutoring and no free advanced schooling. Make the most of your American opportunity."
>
> "Be a good girl -- and study hard," Grandmother had said.
>
> "Daddy thinks that Jade Snow is so intelligent," she had overheard her older sisters say skeptically, "but let's see if she can bring any honors home to our family."
>
> "I resolve to be a credit to Mama and prove that the unkind predictions about her children were wrong," she had vowed once when Daddy was ill.
>
> "Give me the strength and the ability to prove to my family that they have been unjust and make them prouder of me than anyone else," Jade Snow had pleaded in unnumbered prayers.
>
> Constantly, she remembered these challenges.
>
> Moreover, she was most curious about college, and eager to learn more about the new worlds which her high school subjects were just opening up to her.
>
> Yes, Jade Snow agreed with Daddy that education was the path to freedom. Forgotten was her early ambition to be a stenographer. She resolved to ask Daddy to help her with the college fees. After all, he had financed Older Brother's education.
>
> Her next free night, when she was alone with Daddy in the dining room after dinner, Jade Snow broached the subject.
>
> "Daddy, I have been studying the state university catalogue, and I should like to continue my education there, but it will cost more than I can manage, even though I still worked all I could. Would you help me to meet the college expenses?"
>
> Daddy reluctantly pulled himself away from his evening paper and settled back in the large, square, straight, black armchair that was his alone. He took off his dark-rimmed reading glasses, and looked thoughtfully but distractedly at the figure standing respectfully before him. Then he chose his words seriously and deliberately.
>
> "You are quite familiar by now with the fact that it is the sons who perpetuate our ancestral heritage by permanently bearing the Wong family name and transmitting it through their blood line, and therefore the sons must have priority over the daughters when parental provision for advantages must be limited by economic necessity. Generations of sons, bearing our Wong name, are those who make pilgrimages to

ancestral burial grounds and preserve them forever. Our daughters leave home at marriage to give sons to their husbands' families to carry on the heritage for other names.

"Jade Snow, you have been given an above-average Chinese education for an American-born Chinese girl. You now have an average education for an American girl. I must still provide with all my powers for your Older Brother's advanced medical training."

"But Daddy, I want to be more than an average Chinese or American girl. If I stay here, I want to be more than average. If I go to China, I shall advance further with an American college degree," Jade Snow pleaded earnestly.

"I have no other means even though you desire to be above average," Daddy replied evenly, and Jade Snow could not detect either regret or sympathy in his statement of fact. She did not know whether his next words were uttered in challenge or in scorn as he added, "If you have the talent, you can provide for your own college education."

Daddy had spoken. He returned to his Chinese paper with finality and clamped on his glasses again. By habit, Jade Snow questioned aloud no more. She had been trained to make inquiry of Daddy with one question, and to accept his answer; she never asked twice. But her mind was full of questions as it echoed his words, "If you have the talent, you can provide for your own college education."

Tonight his statement did not leave Jade Snow with the customary reaction, "Daddy knows better. Daddy is fair. Even though I do not like what he says, he has eaten more salt than I have eaten rice, and in time I shall understand why this is my own problem and must be endured."

No, his answer tonight left Jade Snow with a new and sudden bitterness against the one person whom she had always trusted as fair to her.

"How can Daddy know what an American advanced education can mean to me? Why should Older Brother be alone in enjoying the major benefits of Daddy's toil? There are no ancestral pilgrimages to be made in the United States! I can't help being born a girl. Perhaps, even being a girl, I don't want to marry, just to raise sons! I am a person, besides being a female! Don't the Chinese admit that women also have feelings and minds?"

Jade Snow retreated to her little bedroom, but now she felt imprisoned. She was trapped in a mesh of tradition woven thousands of miles away by ancestors who had had no knowledge that someday one generation of their progeny might be raised in another culture. Acknowledging that

> she owed her very being and much of her thinking to those ancestors and their tradition, she could not believe that this background was meant to hinder her further development either in America or in China.
>
> Beyond this point, she could not think clearly. Impulsively, she threw on her coat and left the house -- the first time that she had done so without notifying Mama. 33

B. L. Sung, who wrote The Story of the Chinese in America, relates the story of a young girl, Mei-fang, who wanted to go to college. Her father refused, saying that education was unnecessary for girls, and that it would be better if she got married to a man who would take care of her. He was old and wanted to see his daughter married before he died, so he threatened to cut off her support if she went to college. Mei-fang got herself a scholarship and went ahead with her college plans. After her father's anger subsided, "he was boasting to relatives that his daughter was in college."[34]

These examples show how some young Chinese-American women, through determination and hard work, were able to make important decisions that changed their lives. Parental authority did not deter them from obtaining an education and developing their potential to the fullest. This gave them greater personal as well as economic power through work opportunities that higher education made possible. Jade Snow Wong became a famous writer and ceramist and reported her early experiences in Fifth Chinese Daughter as well as in a recently published book -- a sequel to her first autobiography.

Arranged Marriages

The traditional Chinese practice of arranged marriages, accompanied by elaborate celebrations, continued among many of the earlier Chinese-American families, with some modifications. There are several accounts of children criticizing their parents' adherence to this tradition. Both Jade Snow Wong and Virginia Lee voiced their disagreement with their parents in this regard, and discussed it in their books. Wong, for example, recounts her mother's reasons for adhering to tradition, in response to her daughter's questioning.

> "However much you may complain about our Chinese blind marriage tradition, just remember, we never hear of divorce in China, and that our Chinese family affairs have been conducted in an orderly fashion for centuries, increasing rather than diminishing the family strength. Women are brought up knowing what to expect, and knowing that their marriage to a suitable man will be assured by their parents. They take a long patient view of life, and if they are uncomfortable as brides, they know that one day they will be mothers of sons, and one day mothers-in-law. Then they will be able to sit back in comfort to enjoy the position they have earned which no one can deny them." 35

In one novel, a man refuses to go through with a marriage his mother has arranged through a match-maker. In order to avoid insulting the girl and her family, however, he joins the army and tells them he has been drafted.[36]

Fatalism

One theme that runs through many of the readings for early Chinese and Chinese-American women immigrants is fatalism. The idea of events being fated to happen, beyond the control of the individual, was part of Chinese culture and remained a belief of Chinese-Americans. As participants in both cultures, first and second generations, however, often felt internal conflict between Asian fatalism and American self-determination. (One part of The House That Tai Ming Built describes Lin's depression and confusion when the death of her brother coincides with her intended marriage to a Westerner; part of her believes fate is preventing the marriage and part of her believes it is coincidence.)[37]

Identity Problems

Some young Chinese-Americans rebelled against traditional practices, wanting to behave and look like other American youth, especially Anglo-Americans. Chinese-American writers indicate that some children and adolescents even feel ashamed of parents who are not well-off and do not speak English well. In their autobiographies, both Jade Snow Wong and Pardee Lowe described their adolescent rebellion against parental authority. B. L. Sung states that this kind of rebellion "is common to most second-generation Chinese-Americans."[38]

In Fifth Chinese Daughter, Jade Snow Wong compares her family to the Anglo family for whom she worked to support her education. She also compares her mother to her white teacher. Jade Snow felt that her teacher and the Anglo family were more interested in her education and what she was doing than her own mother was.

Another young woman states:

> As I grew older, when I learned more about white society, and its attitudes toward differences of customs and values, looks and appearances, I became ashamed of my parents. That shame of them was not an easy burden. It could not be shared nor could it be confessed, nor could it be eliminated, at an age when my personal worth and self-esteem were still connected with external judgments and approval. To have such feelings toward my parents was a betrayal of their love for me and all they did and tried to do for my welfare. That betrayal was an unwanted burden to my conscience. 39

The Chinese-American women whose writing we have quoted in this section of the overview (Sung, Wong, Lee, and Kingston) reflect some of the identity problems that become more acute in succeeding generations as a result of the differences between Chinese and American cultures. These women, however, are not typical. They had placed a high value on education, were successful in school, tended to assimilate white values and culture, and became artists (who in any case are atypical); they were among the few Chinese-American women who became well known nationally.

By contrast, many second-generation women remained separate from white culture. Unlike the Jade Snow Wongs, some never competed nor excelled professionally despite their educational level. They stayed within the community; they did not want to be like whites (a desire that is more prevalent among some middle-class suburban third and succeeding generations). Identity crises are most common among Chinese-Americans who were isolated from the Chinatown mainstream; those growing up in the Chinese community had more cultural reinforcement and more role models.[40]

Ideals of Beauty: Part of the identity conflict for some women was in their physical appearance. As with African-American women, Chinese-Americans got the message that white skin, blond hair and Anglo features were beautiful and anything else was not. Jade Snow Wong tells of the efforts of the female members of her family to beautify themselves according to the white stereotype of beauty:

> At eleven, Jade Precious Stone was concerned with hairdos, manicures, and make-up, while Jade Snow rejected them as frivolous. As the Wong sisters outgrew their children's Dutch bobs, Mama bought them a Marcel curling iron which had to be heated on a gas burner. The curling iron was Chinatown's latest fad. With its help, straight and coarse black Chinese hair suddenly was transformed into round sausage curls, or done in other fluffy styles, the likes of which Jade Snow's ancestors had never seen.
>
> With the curling iron, Jade Precious Stone and Jade Snow made due experiments on one another. To Mama's and Jade Precious Stone's disgust, Jade Snow decided that she preferred to have no further connection with the Marcel process, but Jade Precious Stone used it often.
>
> This decision had caused an explosion when all the Wongs had gathered to have a family picture taken before the departure of the two older sisters for China. Daddy was very fond of family portraits. Before he came to America he had had large portrait photographs made of his father and mother -- an unusual proceeding for that place and time.
>
> For this occasion, every female had her hair smartly Marcelled; that is, all but Jade Snow, whose hair hung neatly straight to her shoulders. By turns, the family coaxed and ridiculed the recalcitrant member, but Jade Snow grew more grimly stubborn as their pressure became greater. Thus, in the one Wong family picture complete with its in-laws, the camera recorded Jade Snow, defiant and tense, with the only head of straight feminine hair in the group of curly-topped, relaxed, smiling faces. 41

COMPARISON: What feelings about herself does Jade Snow's attitude reflect? Compare her self-image with that of her family and that of African-American women who straighten their hair and bleach their skin to conform to the Anglo idea of beauty.

In conclusion, first-generation Chinese-American women generally choose and exercise greater personal power than their Chinese-born mothers because of their exposure to American culture. However, if we compare the personal power of Chinese-American women with that of the majority of Anglo women, we find that the Chinese-American women were more restricted in many ways. They faced the same constraints that have been imposed upon other minority women. They were particularly discouraged from crossing racial lines. They were also told in many subtle ways that they were different and inferior. As a result, many Chinese-American women, especially young American-born ones, were forced or tempted to try desperately to look and behave like white Americans -- a struggle that was doomed to fail. Because of racism, Chinese-Americans were made to feel ashamed of their looks, their parents, their living conditions, their manners and everything else that distinguished them from others. Recently more and more Chinese-Americans have begun to feel pride in their own ethnic heritage and identity, to confront oppression and to fight for their civil rights. This will be discussed in more detail, however, in the Continuity and Change section.

ECONOMIC POWER

Focus Questions:

In looking for spheres of economic power in the lives of Chinese-American women, see if they have

- *control over the work they do;*
- *control over family earnings;*
- *control over their own earnings;*
- *ways to improve working conditions.*

We have already seen that in feudal China, women had very little power economically (with the exception of upper-class women whose possessions gave them some economic strength). Women were not able to work for pay, could not use their earnings as they wished, and did not own property; in short, the major avenues to acquiring economic power were closed off to them.

Early Immigration

The Myth of the "Mountain of Gold"

Most of the women who emigrated from China belonged to poor families who came to America in search of a better life than they had experienced in their villages, and a limited degree of economic power for the family. America was the "mountain of gold," but the men who dreamed of a chance to gain wealth and power by working hard met with exploitation and racism instead. As we mentioned earlier, Chinese men had to work from sunrise to sunset, in mining, in the railroad industry and in other endeavors for very little reward financially or morally.

The women who came to the U.S. suffered indirectly because of this exploitation of their men, and some women were exploited more directly. Prostitutes, for example, were virtually slaves who received no economic or personal gains for their "work." Theirs was one of the most extreme forms of exploitation. Other women were sold as domestic workers to masters who might then arrange to find husbands for them. If the master could set up a successful match, it could mean relative emancipation for the woman and a lucrative business deal for the master, as this selection indicates:

In 1891 my master and me sailed on the "Billy Jack" to go to my new mistress in Hawaii. We slept on canvas cots and had cheap meat and cabbage for every meal. We could not land in Honolulu because there was a small pox on board ship. We went directly to San Francisco and stayed there for two months. I never saw the shape of the land for I was below the ship. When we came back to Hawaii I was locked in the immigration office for three weeks. How happy I was when my boss came to me. I went to meet my mistress who was never pleasant to me.

The first thing I asked my master for was a piece of sugar cane. He said there is none around the place where we live. How sad I was for I expected cane to be all around.

Mr. Chin was the owner of a large carpenter shop on Nuuanu street. He had many workers. They cooked our meals and they ate in the shop. I always took the meals home for the family. We lived behind the shop. I had to wash clothes, clean the house and the basin. I also waited on the table and when the family was served then I took my bowl to my master for food. I always ate separately from the family table. Whenever I go back for a second helping my mistress would glare at me. Being afraid I used to press the rice in my bowl so that I had my fill and avoided her glance. Although she called me a "slave girl," a good for nothing girl, and beat me unmercifully I was happy to be in Hawaii. At least I had food in my stomach and ate with a silver spoon.

Being a "China Jack" I was tempted by the good taste of the first cookie my mistress gave me. I saw her hang the can on the kitchen wall. As soon as she left the house I helped myself to a cookie and a cup of tea. In my little party she caught me. She took the ruler and beat my fingers to and fro, to and fro. They were all black and blue and she kept on until the ruler broke.

One day after I had swept the house, washed the clothes I went out to play with the neighborhood children who wanted to have some fun with the "China Jack." I was having a good time when my mistress yelled "slave girl" at me. I went into the house expecting and prepared for the outcome. Afraid that the children outside would hear she stuffed my mouth with a dirty rag and beat me with a bamboo rod. I struggled but of no use. After her anger or jealousy was satisfied she made me clean the house again.

> Before I was real dumb. I was afraid to go to school on account of my mistress not giving me money to buy tablets and pencils. I didn't know how to explain to the teacher that my mistress would not give me money for books. I used to hide from the teacher. My mistress said that a "China Jack" like me need not go to school. I sorry I no go before.
>
> I used to go to a shoe maker's and take needles from him for my mistress refused to let me use her needles. Behind her back I learned how to sew. When I was sixteen she went to China for four months. I made sure I learned how to sew dresses for myself. Every ten cents that I earned for sewing button holes for the neighboring tailor I saved to buy materials. When my mistress returned from China she wanted me to sew for her. I wasn't very eager because she, herself, wanted to stop me from learning....
>
> I believe the turning point of my life came when I was eighteen. One morning I overheard my master scold my mistress for wanting to marry me off to a man not of my same group. He said that long ago my mother made him promise that I be married to someone of my own group -- Pun Dee (Punti). He said that it is only fair to present the recent case (suitor) to me. I hurried away from the door and waited to be called any minute. I went before them. My master who was always nice to me said that my mother would be happy to know that I am married and on my own. He said that a merchant, a Mr. Teng, from Wailuku, Maui, is looking for a bride. He is well-to-do but is forty years old. You are only eighteen. I leave the matter up to you. If he told me that the man was sixty I would have gladly said "yes." Here was my chance to escape from the harsh words of my mistress. Better than suffer some more I accepted. How he looks like I did not know but with that thought of freedom in mind I slept peacefully for the first time. 42

Among free women, many wives had to work to help support their families. They could combine economic and family responsibilities, since most worked in a family business that was close to home. This also minimized their need to know English. Others did domestic work for white families or wealthier Chinese families.

Adaptation

Educational and Job Opportunities

There was not much opportunity for the daughters of Chinese immigrants. At first, the small Chinese communities could not afford their own schools. The American public education system was exclusionary at worst and unequal at best. Chinese-American women who were allowed to participate in this system encountered many racist and sexist attitudes. Even the best prepared students found that the same racism and sexism would later keep them from satisfying jobs. It was not unusual for a graduate of the University of California to be a laundry worker or a seamstress. Many immigrant Chinese women who were schoolteachers in China had to take menial jobs in America.

In general, occupational opportunities for Chinese-American women before World War II were extremely limited. Because many lacked knowledge of English, it was almost impossible for them to work outside Chinatown.

Some second-generation Chinese-American daughters -- Jade Snow Wong, for example -- did housework for white families. Jade Snow had no choice but to work in menial jobs to support herself while going to school, but wanted to try something other than working at her family's factory. Within six months after beginning work outside her family business, she had worked at seven different jobs.[43]

A high school student tells of her mother's struggle to work and support a family. Helen was her mother's name: she was a third-generation Chinese-American who was born in San Francisco in 1915.

> Helen had to help in supporting the family as well as take care of her brothers and sisters, and go to school while the parents worked. Much responsibility fell on her to fulfill these tasks and so her life in crowded Chinatown began at a difficult start. At the age of seven, she accompanied her mother to the shrimp factory where they had to clean and shell shrimps (most children did what their mothers did to bring in more income). She had to carry more than twenty pounds of shrimp a day from the wharf across to Chinatown. She received five cents a pound, and if she was diligent she would at most earn fifty cents in one day.
>
> In addition to carrying shrimps, she had to ride the cable car to the Market District produce area to collect vegetables for the family's dinner. 44

A Chinese-American woman who worked at I Wor Kuen Free Health Clinic in New York tells of the demanding schedule of Chinese women workers. Their experience is not unlike that of many working women.

> One woman told us her daily schedule. She gets up around 7:00 a.m. and feeds the family, then rushes the kids to school. Before, when the children were not old enough to go to school, she took them to the sweat shop, hoping there would be some work for her. On a long day, she will work till lunch time and then run home to feed the kids lunch. Then she runs back till 3:00 p.m., picks up the kids and takes them to Chinese school, after which she proceeds to work a couple more hours. Then she goes shopping, picks up the kids with their school work. She barely makes enough money to help clothe the children and to give them nickels and dimes to spend for snacks and school supplies, though her work is very hard and her hours are long. Even with both herself and her husband working, the family had to get food stamps to survive. 45

Unions and Strikes

By the 1930's, Chinese-Americans were participating more fully in white collar jobs and in the activities of the American culture. The years of depression produced an increase in union organization. In San Francisco, for example, the Chinese joined other nationalities in starting unions and striking for better wages and working conditions.

In 1936, Chinese-Americans organized a union in salmon canneries. In 1937, Chinese-American culinary workers participated in a hotel strike. Chinese-American women formed a special branch of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in 1938 and struck the National Dollar Store chain. This strike, which hit the largest garment factory in San Francisco, lasted 14 weeks and had the support of the AFL (American Federation of Labor). Later, when the union's demands for full-time employment were met, the factory was shut down and moved to Los Angeles, leaving the workers to find new employment. This setback did not intimidate the women. That same year, in reaction to Japan's invasion of China, these women staged a dramatic picket against the ships that were sending goods to Japan -- goods that were being made into war materials.[46]

POLITICAL POWER

Focus Questions:

- *In what actions did women have the most political power during early immigration?*
- *In what actions did women have the least political power during early immigration?*
- *In what ways did women have the most political power during the adaptation period (50's and 60's)?*
- *In what ways did they have the least power during that period?*

Early Immigration

From the above discussion, it is clear that the political power of Chinese-American women and Chinese-Americans generally was strongly curtailed during the early period of immigration. The Chinese in America were used as political pawns against China and were exploited and oppressed in many other ways. While the most drastic measures were the exclusion laws discussed earlier and listed on page 571, other legislation restricted employment opportunities. The American Labor movement was also instrumental in creating many forms of racism against Chinese workers. Stanford Lyman refers to the actions of the labor movement as "the Sinophobia of organized labor."[47] Such phobic feelings inflicted major hardships on Chinese families.

Resistance to Racism

Although the Chinese resisted these racist laws and action by refusing to pay bail or fines in many instances, their resistance was met by extremely harsh measures.

In this hostile environment, Chinese-born and American-born Chinese women lacked political power. Neither women nor men could vote in elections, since they were not eligible for citizenship. Their only power lay in their ability to stick together and attempt to resist racism. It was in the 1930's that Chinese-American women were able to gain some political power through unionization, as indicated earlier. But their gains through the unions were limited; the Chinese businesses where they worked were often forced to shut down when they could not comply with the union's demands, and so many of the women workers were laid off. The women were not intimidated, however. They became aware of their power and their potential influence. These and many other women gradually became more politically involved. The picket against the ships sending materials to Japan is an example of such involvement; Chinese-American women's work as Red Cross Volunteers collecting medical supplies for the war victims in China provides another example. Their political participation was a major step in the struggle against the racism and sexism they had long endured. More involvement was to come in the 1950's, 60's and 70's, as we will discuss next.

Adaptation

Repeal of the Exclusion Laws

After World War II, the racist exclusion laws were repealed because of considerable pressure from Chinese-Americans. The 1950's and 60's witnessed a major increase in Chinese immigration to the U.S. Some separated families were reunited and some demographic balance was restored to the Chinese-American communities in the United States. The changes in the status of Chinese-Americans resulting from this increase in immigration and from the continued struggle against economic and political exploitation of Chinese-Americans will be discussed in the Continuity and Change section.

TEACHER'S NOTE: The following section describes the status and experiences of women who were left behind in China awaiting the return of their husbands or hoping for a reunion in the U.S. Some of these women never left China, many others finally moved to the U.S.; yet all the women who did not accompany their husbands or families at first endured similar experiences.

You may want to omit this section, but it will enrich students' understanding of the Chinese immigration situation and some of the emotional and financial pressures on women and men.

OPTIONAL UNIT

The Women Left Behind

As we mentioned earlier, most Chinese men expected to make money and return to their families in China, but many were never able to do so. The exclusion laws made it difficult and often impossible for a woman to accompany her husband to the U.S. Thus, most of the women who stayed behind were compelled to do so. They had to function as both mother and father to children whose only knowledge of their fathers came from the letters sent from America, with some money for their support. Some women were never to see their husbands again, either because the men had settled in America and established new families, or because they had died from disease and hard work.

Of the wives left behind, thousands were young women who had to conform to the strict Confucian code of chastity, as we indicated earlier in our discussion of women in feudal China. Their suffering was reflected in some of their songs. In the villages of the southern provinces of China, where most of the emigrants to America had been born, it was common to hear such songs as this:

> Flowers shall be my headdress once again
> For my dear husband will soon return from a
> distant shore
> Ten long years did I wait
> Trying hard to remember his face
> As I toiled at my spinning wheel each lonely night.[48]

Expected to conform to the role of faithful wife, these women, who were virtually widows, were closely watched by family and village. Any deviation could bring severe reprisals. In A Woman Warrior, Maxine Kingston recounts the fate of her nameless aunt, left behind by her husband.

> She dreamed of a lover for fifteen days of New Years, the time for families to exchange visits, money and food. She plied her secret comb. And sure enough, she cursed the year, the family and herself. 49

This aunt had a sexual relationship that resulted in the birth of a child -- apparently a girl. After the villagers had attacked her family and herself, she ended her suffering by drowning herself and her newborn child in a well.

Some women who were left behind were destined to never be reunited with their husbands. Some wives had to wait as long as 30 years before their husbands sent for them to come. Some men settled in the U.S. and took other wives, but they kept the hope of reunion alive in their first wives by regularly sending home money and letters. In A Woman Warrior, Maxine Kingston tells the story of another aunt, who came to the U.S. as an old woman of 85. She was brought over by a sister who was determined to unite her with her husband.

> "What are we going to do about your husband?" Brave Orchid asked quickly...
>
> "I don't know. Do we have to do something?"
>
> "He does not know you're here."
>
> Moon Orchid did not say anything. For thirty years she had been receiving money from him from America. But she had never told him that she wanted to come to the United States. She waited for him to suggest it, but he never did. Nor did she tell him that her sister had been working for years to transport her here...
>
> "We have to tell him you've arrived," said Brave Orchid.
>
> Moon Orchid's eyes got big like a child's. "I shouldn't be here," she said.
>
> "Nonsense. I want you here, and your daughter wants you here."
>
> "But that's all."
>
> "Your husband is going to have to see you. We'll make him recognize you. Ha. Won't it be fun to see his face? You'll go to his house. And when his second wife answers the door, you say, 'I want to speak to my husband,' and you name his personal name. 'Tell him I'll be sitting

> in the family room.' Walk past her as if she were a servant. She'll scold him when he comes home from work, and it'll serve him right. You yell at him, too."
>
> "I'm scared," said Moon Orchid. "I want to go back to Hong Kong."
>
> "You can't. It's too late. You've sold your apartment. See here. We know his address. He's living in Los Angeles with his second wife, and they have three children. Claim your rights. Those are your children. He's got two sons. You have two sons. You take them away from her. You become their mother."
>
> "Do you really think I can be a mother of sons? Don't you think they'll be loyal to her, since she gave birth to them?"
>
> "The children will go to their true mother -- you," said Brave Orchid. "That's the way it is with mothers and children."
>
> "Do you think he'll get angry at me because I came without telling him?"
>
> "He deserves your getting angry with him. For abandoning you and for abandoning your daughter."
>
> "He didn't abandon me. He's given me so much money. I've had all the food and clothes and servants I've ever wanted. And he's supported our daughter too, even though she's only a girl. He sent her to college. I can't bother him. I mustn't bother him."
>
> "How can you let him get away with this? Bother him. He deserves to be bothered. How dare he marry somebody else when he has you? How can you sit there so calmly? He would've let you stay in China forever." 50

Daughters were also left behind. As they grew up, they heard about a father in the "mountain of gold," and had to follow his edicts, while dreaming of reunion. Life was probably easier for the daughters if they stayed with their mothers in China. But some were left with uncles' or aunts' families.

Girls, it will be recalled, were sometimes sold by their families and eventually sent to America, leaving their mothers behind. One girl who was sold into slavery to a family living in Hawaii was never to see her mother again. She was married to a 60-year-old man when she was only 18. Her husband was kind; he let her write to her mother and send her some money, but it was not enough. As she stated:

> I only longed to see my mother again. I think I would fall in her arms and cry for days, but I never had the chance. She died a year after my husband died in 1921. 51

Because of the importance of the family in China, such hardships caused suffering to both women and men, young and old.

Notes

1. Paul Jacobs, et al., To serve the devil, Vol. II: Colonials and sojourners (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), p. 72.
2. Betty Sung, The story of the Chinese in America (New York: Collier Books, 1971), p. 21.
3. Ibid., pp. 73-75.
4. Wei Min Sh'e Labor Committee, Chinese working people in America: a pictorial history (San Francisco: United Front Press, 1974), p. 11.
5. Victor Nee and Brett de Bary Nee, Longtime Californ': a documentary history of an American Chinatown (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Sentry Edition, 1974), p. 34.
6. Ibid.
7. Wei Min Sh'e Labor Committee, Op. cit., p. 15.
8. Ibid., p. 19.
9. Ibid., p. 23.
10. Ibid., p. 24.
11. Nee and Nee, Op. cit., p. 409.
12. Ibid., p. 25.
13. Ibid., p. 149.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. xix.
16. Stanford Lyman, Chinese Americans (New York: Random House Inc., 1974), pp. 93-94.
17. Jacobs, et al., Op. cit., p. 91.
18. Ibid., p. 93.
19. Elmer Sandmeyer, The anti-Chinese movement in California (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 37.

20. Nee and Nee, *Op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

21. Rose Lee, *The Chinese in the United States of America* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), pp. 191-193.

22. Genny Lim and Judy Yung, "Our Parents Never Told Us," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle*, California Living Section (January 23, 1977), p. 27.

23. Shirley Sun, *Three generations of Chinese --east and west* (Oakland: The Oakland Museum, 1973), p. 27.

24. Lim and Yung, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

25. Virginia Lee, *The house that Tai Ming built* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), pp. 91-92.

26. Sung, *Op. cit.*, pp. 162-163.

27. Tin-Yuke Char, comp., *The sandalwood mountains: readings and stories of the early Chinese in Hawaii* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1975), pp. 121-122.

28. Virginia Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 180.

29. Jade Wong, *Fifth Chinese daughter* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 27.

30. Maxine Kingston, *The woman warrior: memoirs of a girlhood among ghosts* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), pp. 45-47.

31. James Loewen, *The Mississippi Chinese: between black and white* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 66-67.

32. Sung, *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

33. Wong, *Op. cit.*, pp. 108-110.

34. Sung, *Op. cit.*, p. 175.

35. Wong, *Op. cit.*, p. 145.

36. Virginia Lee, *Op. cit.*, pp. 115-126.

37. *Ibid*, pp. 235-238.

38. Sung, *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

39. Asian Writers Project, *Sojourner II* (Berkeley: Berkeley Unified School District, 1972), n.p.

40. Genny Lim, unpublished letter, February 1977.

41. Wong, *Op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

42. Sung, *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

43. Wong, *Op. cit.*, pp. 103-111.

44. Asian Writers Project, *Sojourner IV* (Berkeley: Berkeley Unified School District, 1974), n.p.

45. *Chinese-American workers: past and present* (San Francisco: Getting Together, 1970), p. 50.

46. Wei Min Sh'e Labor Committee, *Op. cit.*, pp. 38-41.

47. Lyman, *Op. cit.*, p. 80.

48. Asian American Studies Center, *Contacts and conflicts: the Asian immigration experience* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1975), p. 23.

49. Kingston, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

50. *Ibid*, pp. 124-125.

51. Tin-Yuke Char, *Op. cit.*, p. 252.

Student Learning Materials

Early Immigration and Adaptation

Asian women. Berkeley: University of California, 1971. 144 pp. Paper. $3.50.

A collection of articles, poems, photographs and graphics by and for Asian women. Divided into four sections: her story, reflections, Third World women, politics of womanhood. Good annotated bibliography.

- Jen Lai. "Oppression and survival" (pp. 24-26).

  Writing about her mother and herself, the author touches on several key themes: her mother's oppression and her heroic response to it; the ways in which the oppressed was also an oppressor to her own daughter; the ways in which her daughter, the author, has come to view this experience. A well-written and thoughtful essay, full of love, anger and strength.

Asian Writers Project. Sojourner IV. Berkeley: Berkeley Unified School District, 1974. Not paged. Paper. $3.00 plus postage and handling, from Asian American Bilingual Center, 2168 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704.

A collection of writing by Asian-American high school students. Poetry and prose, some bilingual; photographs. Personal, also politically aware.

- "Just a trap"

  The story of a first generation Chinese-American mother as told by her daughter. The mother, unskilled and speaking only Chinese, can only find work in a Chinatown sewing factory and later, a fortune cookie factory. Her work, menial and underpaid, is described.

Char, Tin-Yuke, comp. The sandalwood mountains: readings and stories of the early Chinese in Hawaii. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1975. 359 pp. Hardcover. $12.00.

Commentary and readings cover: historical background of 19th-century China, early relations between Hawaii and China, the contract labor system and immigration problems, economic and social development, Chinese organizations in Hawaii, and religious faiths and practices, as well as family histories, lineage and genealogy. See index references to women. A useful book.

- "Changing family relations" (pp. 119-126).

  A sociology paper written by an anonymous student in 1937 depicts wedding customs, slavery, polygamous family life, festival celebrations and funeral practices in an immigrant family of the 1930's.

- "From slave girl to respected grandmother" (pp. 247-253).

  The daughter of a peasant family in China tells of starvation in her village, being sold into slavery to pay for her father's burial, life in Hawaii as a domestic, an arranged marriage with an older man, and her life since then.

Chin, Frank, et al., eds. Aiiieeeee! an anthology of Asian American Writers. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975. 200 pp. Paper. $3.95.

Read the preface and introduction for background from a militant contemporary viewpoint. In addition to the selection below, the excerpt from Louis Chu's novel is relevant.

- Chang, Diana. "From The frontiers of love" (pp. 30-48).

  Sylvia Chen is the daughter of a Chinese father and a Eurasian mother. Born and raised in mainland China until she was 12, she then spent eight years in America, and returned with her family to Shanghai. The time is 1945.

  This episode reinforces stereotypes of the Chinese--both male and female -- as passive, suffering, enduring. The mother, however, is portrayed as temperamental and the only one who can stand up to the father's "soft insistence."

  The mother is unaware of the conflict a mixed heritage has given to her daughter, who feels angry at both mother and father. Culturally, however, Sylvia found America disappointing and treasures instead her memories of China, which betray her privileged position (there is little hint of pre-revolutionary conditions).

  The mother's racism is revealed in her behavior toward the lower class cousin Peiyuan, while Sylvia's response to the westernized Chinese women she encounters accents her desire to hold on to her Chinese heritage.

  Problems with this selection: stereotypes reinforced; general lack of socio-economic-political context or consciousness. Sylvia's portrayal of China is as upper-class and romantic as is her mother's depiction of America. It does not offer her any strength or hope for resolving her identity; at least, no such resolution is present here.

Jacobs, Paul, et al. To serve the devil, Vol. II: Colonials and sojourners. New York: Vintage Books, 1971. 380 pp. Paper. $2.95.

Subtitled "a documentary analysis of America's racial history and why it has been kept hidden," this volume's introduction and section on Chinese-Americans give a useful background.

- "Story of Wong Ah So -- Chinese prostitute" (pp. 151-152).

  A Chinese woman was brought to the United States by a man who claimed he was going to marry her, but instead forced her to be a prostitute.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. The woman warrior: memoirs of a girlhood among ghosts. New York: Vintage, 1977. 243 pp. Paper. $2.45.

A highly acclaimed personal account of a Chinese-American woman's youth. Style and content are difficult because reality is hard to distinguish from fantasy. Could give a negative impression of the Chinese-American experience. Should not be used to generalize (this is true of any selection). Pagination below from hardcover edition. Appropriate to read the whole book, or to read parts. For example:

- "No name woman" (pp. 3-16).

  Ms. Kingston's mother tells her of an aunt in China who shamed the family by an illegitimate birth, then committed suicide. It is meant as a warning: "don't humiliate us." The girl speculates about this aunt: was she raped? did she fall in love? was her sin because she acted individualistically? or was it merely a crime because the village needed food? (This will recall the unit on women in traditional China.)

  More importantly, the girl reflects on the way this story is dealt with by her family, what it reveals about them, and the differences between them and herself. (This could be the focus of discussion.)

Lee, Virginia. The house that Tai Ming built. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963. 246 pp. Hardcover. Out-of-print.

This novel describes a Chinese family's life in traditional China and in San Francisco between 1850 and World War II. The focus is on Lin, the great-great granddaughter of Tai Ming, who founded the Tai Ming trading company in San Francisco and built a beautiful home in China from the money he earned during the gold rush in America. Lin is a combination of Chinese traditions and Western customs, and experiences great pain and internal conflict by falling in love with a Westerner during the second World War.

Although there are some stereotypes of Chinese throughout the novel, there is also much information about Chinese history, family structure and traditions, and the effects of Western culture on the family and the individual. The correspondence and visits between the family in China and in America provide a good comparison of the traditional Chinese and Chinese-American families.

The reading level of this novel is easy.

Commenting on this book and Jade Snow Wong's Fifth Chinese daughter (see below), Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas, editors of Asian American Authors, say:

> These largely autobiographical works tend to suggest the Chinese culture described in the connoisseurs' manuals of Chinese jade or oolong tea, and the stereotype of the Chinese immigrant, either withdrawn and totally Chinese, or greatly assimilated and unobtrusively American, a model of the result of the melting pot process. Yet...these books have a rightful claim to be landmarks in Chinese-American literature because as Virginia Lee

> said in 1970, the authors wrote about the Chinese in America as they saw and understood them. Other Chinese-American writers, if they have a different perception, should come forth with their stories. (p. 10).

Nee, Victor and Nee, Brett. Longtime Californ': a documentary history of an American Chinatown. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Sentry Edition, 1974. 411 pp. Paper. $4.75.

An examination of the past and present of San Francisco's Chinatown. Introduction describes Chinatown -- how it began, who lives there, housing, health, education and worship. More history and observations are interspersed among the many interviews which largely comprise this book. Quite a few women are included.

- "Lilac Chen, 84" (pp. 83-90).

  Ms. Chen recalls being sold by father in China, her life as a prostitute in San Francisco and her "rescue" by missionary Donaldina Cameron and subsequent life.

Wong, Jade Snow. Fifth Chinese daughter. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950. 246 pp. Hardcover. $8.27.

The story of the fifth daughter of the Wong family, who came to San Francisco in the early 1920's. A very moving account of the struggles and triumphs of a young woman torn between Chinese traditions and American values.

See the remarks by Hsu and Palubinskas above (annotation for Lee, The house that Tai Ming built). This book should not be viewed as describing a typical family, but rather the diversity of Chinese-American lifestyles should be stressed.

Chapters of special interest are: Chapter 13, "A person as well as a female," which tells of Jade Snow's struggle to earn some money and to go to college; Chapter 14, "Girl meets boy;" Chapter 15, "Measure of freedom," which tells of her rebellion against parental authority; and Chapter 16, "Marriage old and new style."

Background Information for Teachers

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Anti-Chinese Legislation*

ANTI-CHINESE LEGISLATION: COUNTIES

1852 Columbia District Mining Regulations — prohibit Asians from mining.
1848 Mariposa County Mining Regulations — prohibit Chinese mining.
1870 San Francisco ordinance — outlaws Chinese pole method to peddle vegetables and to carry laundry.
1873 San Francisco Laundry Tax — high tax on laundries [mostly Chinese] that don't use vehicles.
1873-5 San Francisco — various ordinances against use of firecrackers and Chinese ceremonial gongs.
1875 San Francisco Anti-Queue Law — shaving off queues of all Chinese arrested.
1875 San Francisco Cubic Air Ordinance — health regulation aimed at clearing out Chinese ghettoes.
1880 San Francisco Anti-Ironing Ordinance — aimed at shutting down Chinese nighttime laundries.
1882 San Francisco New Laundry Licensing Act — license required of mostly Chinese laundry facilities.
1870 San Francisco — no Chinese can be hired on municipal works.

ANTI-CHINESE LEGISLATION: CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE

1850 [1852, '53, '55] Foreign Miners Tax — tax initially aimed at forcing Chinese out of the mines.
1852 Bond Act — requires all arriving Chinese to post a $500 bond.
1854 Calif. Supreme Court Decision — Chinese ineligible to testify in court against whites.
1855 [1857] Head Tax — shippers must pay $50 for every Chinese passenger they bring to America.
1858 Act to Prevent Further Immigration of Chinese and Mongols — prohibits Chinese entry.
1860 Fishing Tax — tax on Chinese activities in fishing.
1870 Act to Prevent Kidnapping and Importing of Mongolian, Chinese and Japanese Females for Criminal Purposes — prevents entry of Chinese women without special certificate.
1870 Act to Prevent Importing of Chinese Criminals — Chinese males' entry prohibited without proving that person is of good character.
1880 Fishing Act — Chinese prohibited from engaging in any fishing business.
1880 Act to Prevent the Issuance of Licenses to Aliens — Chinese unable to get licenses for businesses or occupations.
1879 California State Constitution — prohibits corporations and municipal works from hiring Chinese; authorizes cities to remove Chinese residents from their boundaries to specified areas.
1885 Political Codes amendment — Chinese prohibited from public schools, must attend separate ones.
1882 California Legislature declares legal holiday — to allow public anti-Chinese demonstrations.
1891 Act Prohibiting Immigration of Chinese Persons into State — prohibits Chinese entry.
1893 Fish and Games Act — prohibits use of Chinese methods [nets] of fishing.
1875 Law to regulate the size of Chinese shrimp-catching nets.
1887 Penal Code — fishing license tax aimed at Chinese fishermen.

ANTI-CHINESE LEGISLATION: FEDERAL

1879 Congressional Act — limits number of Chinese that can come over on one ship at a time [15].
1880 Burlingame Treaty Amendment — prohibits entry of Chinese laborers.
1888 Scott Act — prohibits Chinese re-entry after leaving temporarily.
1892 Geary Act — prohibits Chinese entry; prohibits Chinese right to bail and habeas corpus procedure; Chinese must possess residence certificates.
1989 Act of July 7 — Chinese not permitted to enter Hawaii.

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* From Wei Min Sh'e Labor Committee, Chinese Working People in America: A Pictorial History. San Francisco: United Front Press, 1974, p. 24.

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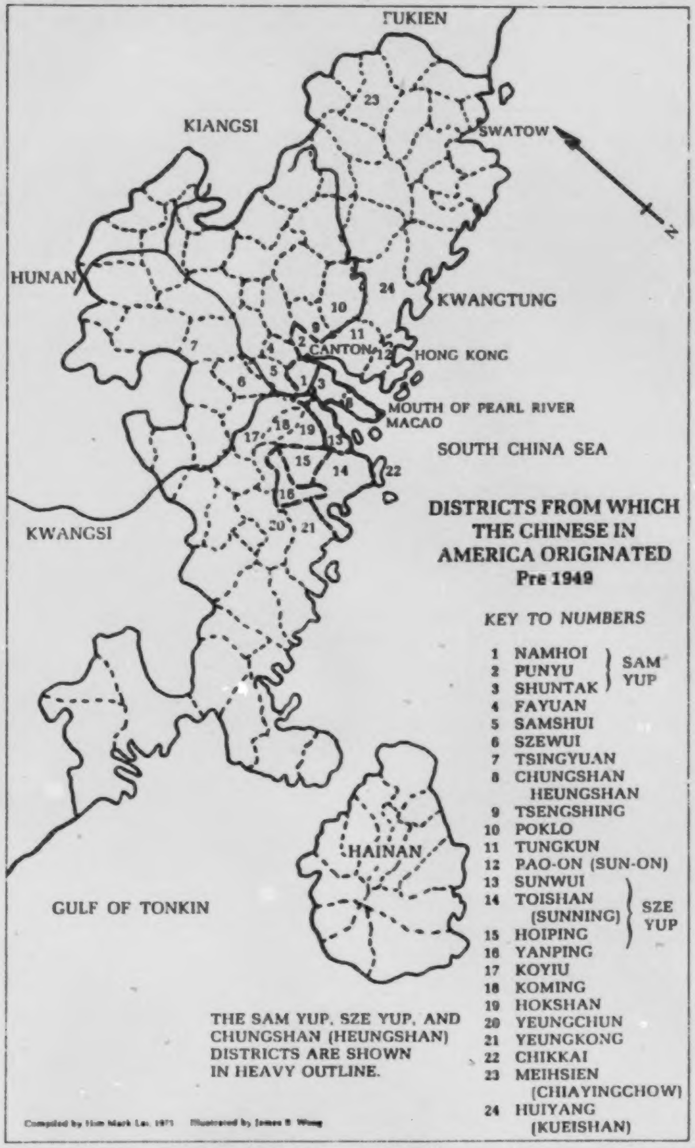
Map of Districts from Which Many Chinese-Americans Emigrated*


FUKIEN
KIANGSI
SWATOW
N
HUNAN
KWANGTUNG
CANTON
HONG KONG
MOUTH OF PEARL RIVER
MACAO
SOUTH CHINA SEA
KWANGSI
HAINAN
GULF OF TONKIN
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
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24
DISTRICTS FROM WHICH THE CHINESE IN AMERICA ORIGINATED
Pre 1949
KEY TO NUMBERS
1 NAMHOI
2 PUNYU
3 SHUNTAK
SAM YUP
4 FAYUAN
5 SAMSHUI
6 SZEWUI
7 TSINGYUAN
8 CHUNGSHAN HEUNGSHAN
9 TSENGSHING
10 POKLO
11 TUNGKUN
12 PAO-ON (SUN-ON)
13 SUNWUI
14 TOISHAN (SUNNING)
15 HOIPING
16 YANPING
SZE YUP
17 KOYIU
18 KOMING
19 HOKSHAN
20 YEUNGCHUN
21 YEUNGKONG
22 CHIKKAI
23 MEIHSIEN (CHIAYINGCHOW)
24 HUIYANG (KUEISHAN)
THE SAM YUP, SZE YUP, AND CHUNGSHAN (HEUNGSHAN) DISTRICTS ARE SHOWN IN HEAVY OUTLINE.
Compiled by Him Mark Lai, 1971
Illustrated by James B. Wong

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* From Nee and Nee, Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Sentry Edition, 1974), p. 411.

Overview on Chinese-American Women:

Continuity and Change

Nagat El-Sanabary
Carolyn Reese

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INFLUENCES BEHIND CHANGE

Unlike African-Americans, who arrived in the United States within a short historical time span, Chinese have continued to move here. The numbers of immigrants have fluctuated according to the restrictiveness or liberality of the immigration laws. Up to the present, recent Chinese immigrants to the U.S. have existed side by side with first-, second-, third- and fourth-generation Chinese-Americans. These generations differ considerably in their degree of assimilation or adaptation to American life. But while their life styles and attitudes vary considerably, all share a common heritage.

Before students focus on the changes and continuities in the roles of Chinese-American women, have them examine some major historical occurrences. These will be discussed in this section.

Concepts to Define:

liberalization

stereotype

cosmopolitan

Communist

ethnic consciousness

interracial marriages

sex object

refugee

cooperative

World War II: World War II greatly affected Chinese-Americans. It prevented them, at least temporarily, from having any thought of returning to China. The men who fought underwent changes through their contact with life in the armed forces and did not discover until they fought in Indo-China just how Americanized they had become. Perhaps the greatest change during this period occurred because of the shortage of labor: many Chinese-Americans were able to enter the American working world for the first time. Women in particular found good, high-paying jobs in defense work. At this time, too, restrictive housing covenants that had prohibited Chinese from buying outside their communities were lifted or liberalized.[1]

The Relaxation of Immigration Laws: In the years directly following World War II, an unprecedented number of Chinese women immigrated because of the repeal of the Exclusion Act of 1882, the passage of amendments to the Immigration Act of 1924 (permitting Chinese wives and children to enter the U.S. as non-quota immigrants) and, finally, the passage of the War Brides Act of 1945 (allowing wives of American soldiers to enter the U.S.). This last act made it possible for Chinese ex-servicemen to go to China, marry, and bring their new wives back. By the end of 1950, more than 6,000 women from China had entered under the War Brides Act, and over 2,000 "separated wives" had entered under the amended Immigration Act.[2]

New Anti-Chinese Feeling: During the post-war years, however, a new wave of anti-Chinese feeling erupted. With the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist party in China, and the establishment of a Communist regime in 1949, Americans felt that their position in the world was suddenly threatened. Extreme anti-Communist fervor spread throughout the country, and Chinese-American communities were once again viewed with suspicion.

Americans wondered who among the Chinese living in the United States was Communist and who was not. Who among the Chinese immigrants might be a Communist infiltrator? Who was merely a refugee from that system? Within the Chinese communities, a parallel struggle ensued between those who supported the new government in China and those who sided with Chiang Kai-shek.

The Korean War and subsequent Chinese troop intervention there increased these tensions. The McCarran Act, passed in 1950, greatly concerned Chinese-Americans because it gave the Attorney General power, in matters of "internal security," to detain persons suspected of "un-American" activities. Remembering the mass internment of Japanese-Americans in relocation camps during World War II, Chinese-Americans wondered if they, too, might face imprisonment.

By the end of the 1950's, it was clear that strong suspicion against every Chinese-American had consolidated the power of the more traditional Chinese groups, who sought to appease the white power system. The more progressive organizations were weakened or eliminated.

Flow of Chinese Refugees: Coinciding with the upheavals in China and the relaxation of immigration laws was a new and steady flow of Chinese refugees that has continued from the 1940's to the present. At first, many of these political refugees were relatively wealthy and could afford to join the second- and third-generation Chinese-Americans who lived outside the Chinese communities. Most of these refugees maintained a traditional sense of class distinction. The majority of immigrants, however, swelled the ranks of the overcrowded Chinatowns of America. They ranged from people reared to value the old Chinese ways to those who had spent considerable time in Hong Kong and had become cosmopolitan in outlook.

Since 1953, United States policy has encouraged the immigration of Chinese professionals and other individuals with high educational and occupational levels, since their skills and attitudes facilitate their absorption into the modern sector of the economy.

Changing Housing Patterns: Most Chinese immigrants to the United States have settled in cities. A few Chinese agricultural communities grew up in California and British Columbia, but the majority of Chinese-Americans lived in urban Chinatowns. Stanford Lyman wrote, "A powerful sense of group feelings and social needs found institutionalized expression in Chinatown at the same time that white aversion and hostility gave added reasons for those Chinese institutions to continue to flourish."[3]

Chinatowns have grown in population but not in territory, and the present population density in San Francisco's Chinatown is among the highest in the world. Buildings are old and often do not meet safety standards. In San Francisco, only six apartment units out of a hundred have adequate plumbing facilities. In their study of Chinatown, Victor and Brett de Bary Nee observed that:

> Communal cooking and communal bathrooms are a way of life in these buildings, where families arrange cooking hours in shifts and where tenants line up with washing items in hand to await the use of bathroom facilities in the morning. The electric wiring systems are antiquated, and many of the windows face into alleys or brick walls so that they are completely deprived of natural light. There is no central heating.[4]

After World War II, housing regulations that enforced segregation were relaxed and some Chinese-American families moved to non-Asian neighborhoods in the city or the suburbs. Outside of Chinatown, they often encountered hostility and prejudice from white neighbors. Despite these difficulties, a considerable number of middle-class professional and white-collar Chinese-American workers have moved away from Chinatown; some families have moved together to the suburbs and reestablished smaller Chinese communities.[5]

The movement out of Chinatown has contributed to the assimilation of Chinese-Americans into the majority American culture. Children attend "white" schools and meet and play with Anglo children. For some of the young people, the move away from Chinatown symbolizes social and economic mobility.

However, older persons often find it difficult to break their attachment to Chinatown, as is illustrated by the following story told by B.L. Sung:

> In one case, there was a seventy-year-old woman who had two sons with beautiful suburban homes. She lived first with one son, then with the other, but the sons and their wives were away for most of the day at business. The old woman felt very lonely. In the end she chose to live in Chinatown in a fifth floor walk-up in a run-down

> apartment house, where she could be with her friends. This woman did not need money for living expenses, but she found employment in a garment factory sitting on a footstool cutting off threadends as the seamstresses pulled the garments from the sewing machines. The wages were minimal, and a zealous social worker could make a case of sweatshop labor of it, but the woman was much happier than if she were wandering among the upholstered furniture on the carpeted living rooms in her sons' homes without a soul to talk to.[6]

In Chinatown, this woman had important social ties. There, her emotional needs were satisfied through association with women with whom she could talk in her Chinese dialect.

Education: Education has traditionally been valued by the Chinese; in China, scholars were the highest-ranking group. Chinese-Americans still place high emphasis on education and scholastic achievement. However, as mentioned previously, Chinese-American children were excluded from the racially segregated public school system; the Chinese had to fight to have their children educated in white schools. Several Chinese-American women, through hard work and determination, were able to attend college in the 1930's and 1940's. Since the 1950's, Chinese-Americans have attended top-level colleges and universities and graduated with honors in increasingly large numbers. The U.S. census for 1960 showed that of Chinese-American women 14 years of age and older, 12.3 percent have completed four years of college or more, as compared to 5.3 percent among white women and 2.8 percent among Black women.[7]

However, a large proportion of Chinese-American women 45 years and older have never been to school. For the most part, these are women born in China of poor families. In their native country, their educational opportunities were extremely limited and similarly, in the U.S., they had no time and little opportunity for school.

Despite the relatively recent major achievements of Chinese-Americans in education, they still face discrimination. Before the institution of public school busing in 1971, the majority of Chinese children attended primary and secondary schools that were predominantly Chinese (over 95 percent of the students at the primary level, and 65 percent at the secondary). These schools were staffed primarily by white teachers. But busing created as many problems as it solved. A 1971-72 boycott of school busing by the conservative Chinese Six Companies, for example, demonstrated the existence of a widening rift between Chinatown parents and the San Francisco Public School System.[8]

Today, the busing issue is far from being resolved. The Chinese want the schools to be responsive to the needs of their children, especially to the needs of new immigrants from Hong Kong who face serious language difficulties. They want more Chinese-American teachers and administrators, and a school curriculum that includes Chinese contributions to American life.

Moreover, Chinese-American students still are stereotyped as being competitive and hardworking. They feel that their respect for learning should be recognized as such and not overstated in stereotypes. Many feel that education is their best means of social mobility, and of escape from the exploitation their parents suffered. One young Chinese-American woman comments on competition in terms of the realities underlying it rather than as a cut-and-dried stereotype:

> But, you see, the Chinese are very competitive. They like to outdo each other, even in education. I know this was true especially in Chinese school. In the Chinese Central High School, for instance, a lot of the people in our class were very good in Chinese. Particularly the ones who came from Hong Kong; technically they were far ahead of us American-born, and there was always this latent feud between us. And whenever an American-born did better that a Chinese-born boy, you better watch out (laughs).
>
> I think it's that same kind of competitiveness that made my mother emphasize work so much and always push us to do well. When I think about it now, I wish she had taught us to spread ourselves in different areas more. Spend some time on books, some time with friends, having a good time -- to be well-rounded.[9]

The Civil Rights Movement and Ethnic Consciousness: The civil rights movement in the 1960's awakened not just African-Americans but many ethnic minorities to the need to fight against and eliminate the oppressive racist attitudes they had endured for nearly a whole century. Chinese-Americans felt pride in their own ethnic heritage. They were determined to confront their oppression and erase the stereotypes that hampered their progress in personal, economic and political spheres. This determination was furthered by the anti-war movement. Chinese-Americans were among those who most strongly opposed the Vietnam War not only on ethical and moral grounds, but because it affected them more than any other ethnic minority in America. The Vietnam War nurtured the stereotypes of Chinese-Americans that had been created during earlier periods of hostility against them. These stereotypes were solidified and expanded by the attitudes of men who fought in Japan, Korea and Vietnam, and are still being perpetuated by the media.

TEACHER'S NOTE: After you present the information on influences behind the changing experiences of Chinese-Americans, compare these influences with modern influences on change in the other culture you are teaching.

Have the class look for social-political trends in the United States and how they might affect women. Use the timeline provided. For example, after learning of how the Black power movement influenced African-American women's self-image, could students predict how the civil rights movement and ethnic consciousness would affect Chinese-American women? Or, can students look at an influence such as changed housing patterns and apply it to Black Americans? Perhaps the class is acquainted with the Fair Housing legislation; do the students feel that white-collar and professional Black Americans have moved outside same-culture communities to the degree that Asian-Americans have? Why or why not?

As students read the following sections on economic, political and personal power, they should describe changes in women's power in terms of the number and quality of options open to them in activities, jobs, political influence and persons to whom they can relate. Students should also notice where traditional sources of power or lack of power remain, and should consider the degree of satisfaction different women gain from their lives. Finally, this question is important: If a woman has more choices, does she have more power?

PERSONAL POWER

Focus Questions:

In looking at continuities and changes in the personal power of modern Chinese-American women, notice if they have more control over:

- the use of their bodies;

- the standards of beauty for women;

- the choice of persons to whom they relate;

- whom they marry;

- where they may live;

- whether or not they gain respect.

Do they have more power than previously?

Do they have less power than previously?

We must again stress that the life styles of Chinese-American women reflect a great deal of diversity. As we already mentioned, first-, second-, third- and fourth-generation Chinese-Americans presently live in the United States; just as their experiences are vastly different, so too are the degrees of personal power that they possess. For example, a newly arrived woman from Hong Kong faces problems different from those faced by a second- or third-generation Chinese-American woman.

> *STUDENT ACTIVITY: This diversity is true of many groups in America where immigration in large numbers is still occurring, e.g., Mexicans and Latins, other Asians, peoples from the Middle East. If students have newly arrived immigrants in their families or neighborhoods, or have read books about the lives of recent immigrants, have them think of some instances where the personal power of the immigrant might be different from the personal power of a person who has lived in America for some time.*
>
> *Discuss the major problem of language difficulties. Can the students imagine being in a strange place where no one understood English? Have they ever had this experience? How would, or did, they communicate?*

Cosmopolitan Women from Hong Kong: Because of the liberalization of immigration laws, three specific categories of Chinese women began to immigrate after World War II: sophisticated women from Hong Kong, older women from the villages who were reunited with their husbands (the separated wives), and professional women. All these women faced various adjustment problems when they came to this country.

After World War II, many Chinese men went to Hong Kong to get married. Some of them had been single for many years. Most men followed the traditional Chinese pattern of choosing a wife, which entailed sending their elders, parents or relatives to find them a suitable woman through a go-between. The man was allowed to meet his prospective wife in either one of the following ways. Sometimes it was arranged that the woman walk through a certain street at an appointed time, and the matchmaker would point her out to the man. The more common arrangement, though, was to have the man and woman meet in a tea house in the presence of the matchmaker and chaperones.

If the man was favorably impressed, he would ask for a second or third meeting to get more acquainted with his prospective bride. He would ask the girl a few questions and "elicit a few demure replies." If he was still enthusiastic, he would ask the go-between to make the marriage proposal.[10]

A Chinese-American husband was "a sought-after prize." Many young, educated and beautiful girls vied to marry a man from the "mountain of gold." The man would do his best to impress the woman, dressing in his best attire and spending much of what he had saved for this occasion. Differences in background or age were compensated for by the attractiveness of America. Marriages between a young woman and a man who was 10, 20 or 30 years her elder were therefore common, but the first reaction of many of these women when they arrived in the United States was disappointment. Betty Sung describes the reactions of Chinese women she talked with in the United States.

> They are shocked to learn that the husband must wash other people's dirty shirts or prepare other people's meals to earn a living. They are shocked if the family living quarters are behind the laundry, above the restaurant, or in the crowded, dilapidated quarters of Chinatown. They are shocked at the heavy load of work both husband and wife must do. Separated suddenly from their family and friends and catapulted by jet from an Oriental environment to an Occidental one, they are confronted with the compound problem of accommodation and adjustment to their husbands and to their new life. The rainbow they had conjured up in their minds based on the popular misconception of the United States vanishes, and their disillusionment is great.[11]

COMPARISON: Many African-American women who migrated north to the cities were equally disillusioned when they found that the wealth, jobs and better living conditions they expected were not forthcoming.

During the years when poor families from Europe immigrated to America in large numbers, European women, used to living in the relatively healthy countryside, were shocked when they found that they had to crowd together in dark unhealthy rooms in the big cities of the East.

Throughout American history, many women have had to face such disappointments. Part of the problem stems from the

> *fact that women have been socialized to attach themselves to the dreams of their men, who often cannot perceive what this new venture might actually mean to a woman. This was true in the experiences of many pioneer women. For example, Harriet Noble found herself moving to Michigan in the 1820's when her husband was "seized with the mania" to open the West. With her very small children, Noble was not prepared for the rough journey, the cold weather, living out of doors and particularly the loneliness. She writes of her feelings of deprivation at a time when she is left all alone with her children.*

> I think it was December when my husband went to Detroit for supplies. Fifteen days were consumed in going and coming. We had been without flour for three weeks or more, and it was hard to manage with young children thus. After being without bread three or four days, my little boy, two years old, looked me in the face and said, "Ma, why don't you make bread; don't you like it? I do." His innocent complaint brought forth the first tears I had shed in Michigan on account of any privations I had to suffer, and they were about the last. I am not of a desponding disposition, nor often low-spirited, and having left New York to make Michigan my home, I had no idea of going back, or being very unhappy. Yet the want of society, of church privileges, and in fact almost everything that makes life desirable, would often make me sad in spite of all effort to the contrary. I had no ladies' society for one year after coming to Dexter, except that of sister Noble and a Mrs. Taylor, and was more lonely than either of them, my family being so small.[12]

In marriages between Hong Kong women and Chinese-American men, there were frequently differences not only in age, but also in educational and cultural values. Generally, first generation Chinese-Americans tended to cling to traditional Chinese values and expected their Chinese-born wives to conform to them. In contrast, traditional values were not strongly upheld in either Taiwan or mainland China after 1949. Women expecting Westernized husbands were often shocked by their traditional attitudes. These differences in expectations and cultural values resulted in tensions and problems. If the conflicts proved insurmountable, women could seek divorce, but it is reported that the divorce rate in Chinese-

American communities was low "because wives are not sophisticated enough to seek a legal severance of their marriage." Sometimes the wife ran away to "form another union by the de facto act of cohabitation."[13] This was one way in which the woman asserted her power.

Suicide is another form of escape. B. L. Sung states that "the suicide rate among the Chinese in San Francisco is four times greater than for the city as a whole, and it is predominantly the women who decide to end it all."[14] Poverty and isolation as well as unresolved marital problems may account for suicide among women in Chinatowns, since suicide reflects a complete loss of power over one's surroundings. (Remember that in China suicide was a form of escape for women until the 1950's.)

Some of the Hong Kong brides were able to exert strong influence on their husbands, make important decisions, and handle the consequences, thus manifesting considerable personal power. A women, for instance, nagged her husband until he closed his family laundry and found work in an aircraft factory (for $75 a week), then found it very difficult to live on his $75 salary and decided to re-open the laundry, to the astonishment of her husband and children. She managed the business, while her husband kept his work in the factory. She set her own work hours and gained a sense of achievement for doing something out of choice and in response to a special need. Her previous hatred of the family laundry business disappeared. Betty Sung writes:

> Once it was her master, dominating the twenty-four hours of her daily life. Her working hours were six in the morning until ten or eleven at night. There was no escape from the work because it was always staring her in the face. And it seemed such a shame to send the work out when she was sitting in the laundry anyway. Nowadays, Mrs. Ma closes the door of her laundry at seven and heads for home, dinner, and rest. Comfortably settled in an upholstered chair, she is not apt to get up and tramp several blocks back to the laundry to do the odds and ends that plague one's mind when the work is in plain sight. Now under her control, the income from the laundry has relieved her of financial worries.[15]

This woman was able to gain personal power and satisfaction through a decision to change and assume economic power by making use of the business she established and managed.

Reunited Wives and Daughters: During this period of expanded immigration, there were many reunions between Chinese men who had been in America for a long time, and the wives they had left behind. After a separation of up to thirty years, both the spouses dreamed of the day of reunion, which often turned out to be a disappointment. B. L. Sung tells of the reunion of a couple who had been separated for 30 years.

> I was witness to the reunion of a couple in their fifties at the Kennedy International Airport in New York. Husband and wife had not seen each other for more than 30 years. The couple had a grown son and grandchildren, and this was the bond that held them together.
>
> When we met the wife at the airport, I saw a withered old woman with her hair tied up in a thin knot. The husband beside me gasped when he saw her. "How come she looks like that?" he asked. He turned almost as if looking for an escape. Then he repeated, "How come she looks like that?" One could see that his anguish was acute, but today, more than ten years later, this couple has kept their marriage intact. Each has accepted the other for what he or she is.
>
> These older marriages, having survived the initial shock, generally settle into fairly comfortable arrangements in which both partners try to make the best of things. They are too deeply ingrained with family name and obligation, so that for one to forsake the other for personal happiness is uncommon.[16]

Some separated wives had learned to be independent during the husband's years of absence in the United States. Some had been able to start and maintain a business in China with the money sent to them by their husbands. The reunion of such women with their husbands was sometimes traumatic since it resulted in considerable loss of both personal and economic power. This can be seen in the following account of a Chinese-born woman, Mrs. X, who had trouble adjusting to her new life in America.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: What personal and economic power did Mrs. X lose when she came to America? What do you think Mrs. X's expectations of life in America might have been? What actually happened? What external influences changed Mrs. X's expectations of her life?

Case-history of Mrs. X. A pertinent illustration of interpersonal adjustment was that of Mrs. X -- reared in a coastal city and living in Hong Kong the major part of her married life. She flatly declared that her husband was a stranger with whom she had cohabited but five months after the wedding ceremony. She did not see him again until eighteen years had elapsed, when the husband arranged for her and her son, whom the father had never seen, to fly to the southeastern part of the United States. During the husband's absence, Mrs. X had filled her days with varied activities, cultivated congenial friends, developed a flair for investing the money her husband remitted periodically, and was consulted by others on business matters. She was well integrated into the Colony's social life when her husband arranged for her and the son to travel to the United States.

Mrs. X and her eighteen-year-old son spent an anxious time aboard the trans-Pacific plane as both knew little English. After arriving on the West Coast, they emplaned for the city where her husband had an established business, a restaurant. Through a change in plane schedules and the miscarriage of information, the weary travellers arrived during the small hours of the morning at the airport and found no one to greet them. Mrs. X finally made her plight known to a taxicab driver who recognized her husband's address which she had carried all through the journey on a small slip of paper. After a long ride from the airport, located between two cities, the newcomers reached their destination to find the restaurant dark and closed for the night. Together, mother and son pounded the door and finally awakened the sleeping occupants inside. The husband-father--dishevelled, drowsy, and irritated--finally appeared and greeted the weary travellers. The reunion for this separated family left much to be desired.

Mrs. X was very lonesome, although two other Chinese families lived in this city. One family mixed primarily with Caucasians of comparable college level and professional interests, since their life revolved around the renowned University there. At the opposite extreme was a sojourner's family the head of which ran a laundry. His family members had recently joined him. The restaurateur's family had the more

> difficult adjustment to make, because Mrs. X's ideational mobility, sophistication and independence exceeded that of her husband. The son was lonely too, as his English was not equal to that of the children with whom he was expected to socialize.
>
> Mrs. X was keenly disappointed in her husband's business methods and hours of work. As a successful proprietor and operator of the leading restaurant in the city, he "slaved," whereas, in her conception, a similarly placed person in China would walk about, direct the workers, collect his intake, safeguard and reinvest his profit, but abstain from strenuous manual labour. Moreover, she did not understand his friendliness to his waitresses and conjured up many doubts about his sexual habits during their years of separation.
>
> Although her husband had thoughtfully rented a furnished apartment in a nice residential neighborhood from an American friend of long standing, Mrs. X was dissatisfied -- not so much with the living arrangements as with the lack of friends, social life, and familiar reference groups. She urged, without success, that the restaurant be sold and for Mr. X to return to Hong Kong and be a "Chinese gentleman."
>
> As time wore on, however, a child was born to Mr. and Mrs. X. The new sibling was twenty years younger than the older boy who grew closer to the father through assuming some of the latter's responsibilities connected with the restaurant. A few years later, Mr. X died from a heart attack and left his widow with a young child to rear. Mrs. X had learned to help operate the restaurant, and from last reports it seems she has regained opportunities to demonstrate her business acumen and independence.

As a result of such traumatic and dissatisfying reunions as that of Mr. and Mrs. X., many women returned to China.

Many of the daughters who were reunited with their fathers in the United States were also disappointed by the living conditions in Chinatown, and the restrictions they had to face because of language problems. Most had received a good education in China because of the remittance sent by the father from the U.S. Some teenage girls rejected the authoritarianism and domination of their fathers and ran away, taking up residence in American homes or youth hostels if they succeeded in finding employment.

Although most Chinese women who came to the United States were "brought" over by their husbands or fathers, many women came to America on their own. A high school girl in Berkeley, California tells her mother's reasons for coming to the U.S. after the death of her husband.

> My mother -- her mind is absolutely political. She had decided to join the Communist Party when she was still living in China at the age of twenty. But my grandmother strongly disagreed with her decision because she believed that it was the Communists who killed her husband. Actually it was my grandfather's relatives and friends who returned him evil from good. My mother obeyed my grandmother with partial respect. Then she went to Hong Kong to seek a better way of life.
>
> Now my mother is forty-five years of age. Nothing can change her, her mind is still as political as before. She always reminds us to study hard and make something out of ourselves. Then go back to serve our country, our people.
>
> Since she couldn't be what she wanted to be, she put all her hopes on us. We all respect her.
>
> The main reason she decided to come to this foreign land was because she thought Hong Kong is not a place for a good education and not a place for a successful future. She wanted us to have a good education, to make something out of ourselves, to go back to China to serve our people and our country.
>
> My mother and I have not much in common... her mind is political but much of her thinking belonged to the older generation, for example: she will not approve dates until we get to a certain age.
>
> Me and my mother have only one thing in common, that is, we have strong and political minds.[18]

STUDENT ACTIVITY: In the previous account, a high school girl described the kind of woman she felt her mother to be. This can be hard to do. Write or tell an incident about your mother that describes who she is (tell something about her as a person).

American-Born Women Assimilate American Values: Chinese-American women who were born and raised in the United States have come to share the diverse values that Americans espouse concerning the roles of women in society. Some have even come to accept the norms and standards of beauty set up by white America, and their personalities and lives have been harmed as a consequence.

One potentially strong source of personal power is a feeling of pride in one's own ethnic identity. One of society's most effective means of creating a feeling of personal powerlessness in members of minority groups is to suppress their ethnic identity and insist that they look, behave and even believe, as members of the dominant culture look, behave and believe. The concept of the melting pot was intended to achieve this aim, but it had very limited "success."

In the following pages, we will discuss the ways in which racist and sexist attitudes and practices affected the personal power of Chinese-American women. Because of stereotypes, derogatory statements and subtle forms of discrimination, Chinese-Americans are continually reminded of the differences between themselves and white "mainstream" America. Some young Chinese-Americans feel that complete assimilation into the main culture is preferable to maintaining cultural differences. At times, they are ashamed of their parents, their customs and even their physical features. They accept the desirability of the "typical" American appearance and way of life (which is itself a myth). Shirley Sun asserts:

> Since World War I the Chinese in America have been thoroughly acculturated without having been assimilated into American society. That is, while the second, third or fourth generation Chinese-American has become totally Americanized, he has not been totally accepted as an American. The desire to become All American and thus accepted is strongest in childhood. An extreme example of this is that of some Chinese-American children who refuse to eat rice, use chopsticks, or speak Chinese in fear of being different.[19]

An attempt at over-assimilation is revealed in a story reported by B. L. Sung.

> "Stop calling me Chinese," retorted Lila Huey of Golden, Colorado. "I'm American. My father happened to be born in China, but he's been here for more than thirty years. My mother was born in this country, and we're citizens of the United States.
>
> "I have no interest in China, and it always rubs me the wrong way when strangers ask me if I'm Chinese or Japanese. I answer by asking them if they are Italian or Greek or whatever."
>
> Lila was brought up in Golden, Colorado, where her father ran a grocery store. Rarely was Chinese spoken at home, and when it was, it was a scattered word or phrase sandwiched in between the English. The few Chinese families in Golden lived far apart, and though the parents visited back and forth, Lila and her brother and sister found their friends and schoolmates in the neighborhood. The family grocery store was a popular gathering place for the people in the neighborhood, and when customers came in, they not only bought but stopped to chat and gossip with Lila's parents.
>
> Lila's father and mother liked Chinese food, but the ingredients had to be ordered from San Francisco. Besides, it was so much simpler to prepare American food. However, on the Chinese New Year, Lila's father personally saw to it that authentic Chinese dishes were prepared. Lila recalled with fond memories those Chinese New Years' dinners.
>
> All three Huey children graduated from the University of Washington. Lila majored in biology and was a member of the cheering squad. She had no difficulty getting a job after graduation as a laboratory technician for a brewery company. In college, Lila dated Chinese boys, and for the first time in her life, realized that she was not entirely Americanized.
>
> "I would like to marry a man of my own race," confessed Lila, "but gosh, the boys from Seattle and Portland that I knew in college were more than 'squares.' We didn't even speak the same language."[20]

Dual Identities: One result of the prevailing stereotypes of Chinese-Americans is an identity problem, especially among the younger Chinese-Americans who may be torn between two cultures. Older parents may emphasize traditional Chinese values and behavior, because they do not want their children to lose their cultural identity. A young Chinese-American woman may submit to parental authority in matters of little significance such as serving tea in a certain manner, but she feels that she must make her own decisions in matters affecting her life significantly, such as the choice of a husband. This sort of accommodation is described in the following statement by a third-generation daughter, aged 19:

> We conform to many of the Chinese customs in little things, such as serving tea with two hands on the cup or saucer, respecting all people older than ourselves, taking small steps and not being boisterous, using certain phrases at certain times, but in larger things such as marriage and divorce and in the treatment of our own children, we young people refuse to conform.[21]

Chinese parents often function as a stabilizing force in their attempts to foster traditional Chinese values and practices among their children. However, it is clear from the above statement that younger Chinese-American women are determined to exercise control in the most important parts of their lives, whether or not they conform in more symbolic matters. It was only recently that Chinese-American women came to realize the worth of their parents' emphasis on maintaining certain traditional values, thus enabling them to resist the dominant culture's racist pressure to move away from ethnic identity.

> *COMPARISON: There are conflicts in many families when the parents maintain the traditions and attitudes of their culture while their children must function in a different environment. Jennie Cristina Madrigal is a Chicana who describes her elementary school years as being "miserable" because of the conflict between her mother's cultural expectations of her and the realities of the "Anglo" school.*

> My first day at grade school, as through all grade school, was miserable. My mother made sure I had a new dress, white socks and well (tight) braided hair. I remember not being able to move my head around too good. All through grade school I kept mostly to myself, having only two good friends all along. I never got asked by my Anglo friends to stay overnight, or go to a party. Besides, mama would not have let me go, she always felt she had to keep an eye out on us. We hardly visited because I remember my mama saying she never wanted anyone telling her children anything.[22]

> *Jennie's discomfort in school is compounded, moreover, by her feeling of rejection based on her color as well as her culture. Many Third World people experience this double oppression.*

> I managed to survive grade school, but the mental strain was terrible. Somewhere along the line, I felt left out. I usually wore long sleeved blouses, so my dark arms wouldn't show. At that young age, I already felt like a failure. One teacher in grade school would send me outside to play because she figured I'd never amount to much; she had already stereotyped me.[23]

Interracial Marriages: It is claimed that Chinese-American women have a better chance of intermingling with whites and acquiring white social graces, and are freer to assimilate white American values and lifestyles than are Chinese-American men. Often the men work harder and have less time to acquire white American values.[24] Consequently, Chinese-American women marry white men to a greater extent than Chinese-American males marry white females. The repeal of the anti-miscegenation acts rendered interracial marriages legal, but the marriage of a Chinese-American male to a white woman remains unacceptable in many communities. Figures from the 1970 Census indicate that 59 percent of the Chinese-American female population have intermarried with white men. Betty Sung states that "out" marriage among Chinese-American women is quite common:

> ...a few summers back it suddenly dawned upon me, as I was wrapping up another wedding gift, that this was the sixth Chinese girl friend or relative who had married a Caucasian husband within the relatively short period of three months. I mentioned this fact to a girl friend who did not share my surprise in the revelation at all. Of eight brothers and sisters in her family, she was the only one married to a Chinese.[25]

The stereotype of the Chinese-American woman as feminine and exotic has made her a sought-after marriage partner.

COMPARISON: Notice the contrast with African-Americans; it is more acceptable for Black males to marry white females. There are complex factors behind this difference. Sexism and racism oppress different cultures in different ways.

Although some Chinese-American women reject men of their culture and seek white men as friends and marriage partners, other women experience difficulties in relating to white males. The following statement is by a Japanese-American woman -- Jan Masaoka. Her dilemma is similar to that of some Chinese-American women.

> I guess that one of the most difficult things for me to understand is how to relate to my boyfriend who is white. Sometimes I flash back on all the ideas my parents taught me such as the idea that to marry a white man was to sort of degrade myself, and it's really hard to know how to deal with these kinds of feelings.
>
> I once read this poem by an Asian woman where she said that after looking into blue eyes for so long she forgot hers were black. I really feel this, and it's hard to understand: I identify so strongly with this man I love and that's inevitably tied up somewhat to the way he looks, which conflicts with me and my background and the way I look.
>
> So I look at him and all the feelings I have get mixed up and make me upset and dizzy: loving him, hating myself for loving a white man, hating him because he's white, hating white people in general, feeling underneath that I'm superior to

white people, and even deeper underneath that I'm inferior to white people, especially men, feeling guilty for not having an Asian boyfriend, feeling that I'm taking unfair advantage of my social and sexual mobility racially when Asian men don't have that mobility, and being afraid of what other people think about my going with a white man -- it's just really frightening.

It seems to me that there are three reasons why it is more acceptable for an Asian woman to be seen with a white man or marry one than it is for an Asian man to marry a white woman. First, in this country, people have become accustomed to seeing "war brides," and so the sight of an Asian woman with a white man is a little more familiar. Second, Asian women are rather "exotic" these days -- you know us -- combs float through our hair as we rinse with coconut oil in front of the waterfalls every morning. Third, because this society puts the woman in the "lower" position of the marriage, it seems more acceptable for the "lower" race to be in the "lower" position rather than for the "lower" Asian male to be in the "higher" male position of the marriage. This is disgusting logic, but it sure causes problems.

Also, white men have always had the "privilege" in this country of getting their kicks using women in any way they can, whether that means using black slave women for pleasure and to breed more slaves to sell, being unfaithful but forbidding it for their wives, or going out with Third World women but ridiculing white women who go out with Third World men.

I have a Japanese man friend who was once beat up by some white boys for being on the street with a white girl. Actually, it was an unusual situation in the first place since many white women won't go out with Asian men because "I'm just not attracted to them." So, where Asian men are sort of "restricted" to Asian women -- maybe even to their own nationality -- Asian women are more or less free to go out with white men. As a result, Asian men can resent Asian women who do take advantage of that freedom, and we Asian women don't know how to feel.

Problems like this are not new or unique to Asians. Men and women of oppressed groups have always been divided by values and pressures of the dominating group, not only sexual ones but pressures for money and status symbols, too.[26]

COMPARISON: Contrast images of Black men and Chinese-American men, of Black women and Chinese-American women in terms of the impact of these images on interracial dating and marriage patterns and the impact on relationships between men and women of non-white groups.

TEACHER'S NOTE: If you are uncomfortable presenting the information in the following section or feel students will find it difficult to discuss, go on to the next section. You might use the readings or articles in this section to discuss other aspects of personal power.

Beauty Standards and Sexual Exploitation: Another "dual identity" problem that Chinese-American women may experience results from the disparity between white physical characteristics of beauty and Asian physical characteristics. The absurdity and futility of conforming to beauty ideals that do not come from one's own culture is reflected in this statement by Jan Masaoka:

> The typical sexy American women are fair, with long slender legs, big eyes and big breasts while Asian women are dark, have short stocky legs, almond eyes and small breasts. The American ideal is ridiculous and sick for American women, but it is much harder when you're Asian and know you'll never live up to that. When I was a little girl I thought that the epitome of beauty was blond hair and blue eyes, a pretty common vision for little girls in America, I guess, but when I looked in the mirror, I just knew I was hopeless![27]

Some Asian males also swallow the message of the superiority of white/Anglo culture and standards of beauty. In the following poem, Ron Tanaka expresses his awareness of this conflict.

> I hate my wife for her flat yellow face
> and her fat cucumber legs, but mostly
> for her lack of elegance and lack of
> intelligence compared to judith gluck.
>
> I married my wife, daughter of a rich
> east los angeles banker, for money.
> of course, I thought I deserved better, but
> suffering is something else altogether.

She married me for love but she can't love
me, since no one who went to Fresno State
knows anything about Warhol or Ginsberg or
Viet Nam. She has no jewish friends.

She's like a stupid water buffalo from
the old country, slowly plodding between
muddy furrows, and that's all she knows of
love beneath my curses and sometimes blows.

I thought I could love her at first, that she
could teach me to be myself again, free
from years of bopping round LA ghettos,
western civilization and the playmate of the month

since she was raised a buddhist with all
the arts of dancing, arranging and the
serving of tea, and I thought I saw in my
arrogance some long forgotten warrior prince.

But I wanted to be an anglican
too much and listened too long to dylan
or maybe it was the playmate of the
month or poetry and judith gluck.

So I hate my gentle wife for her flat
yellow face and her soft cucumber legs
bearing the burden of the love she has
borne for centuries, centuries before
anglicans and dylans
playmates and rock
before
me or judith gluck[28]

Although Asian physical features have not conformed to what Caucasians in America perceived as beautiful, Asian women have often been viewed as delicate, passive and sexually free women. These stereotypes particularly grew with the involvement of American soldiers in Asia in World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars. Asian women were viewed by GI's as prostitutes or dolls. They were depicted as less human than white women, and certainly as more exotic. Media characters such as the "Dragon Lady" (an evil, scheming, deadly character who became popular in a cartoon strip published during World War II) and "Suzie Wong" (a Hong Kong bar girl and prostitute) are two contributions of the media to the stereotyped image of Asian women.[29]

Today, myths about the sexual differences between Asian and Anglo women persist. For example, newspaper ads for adult movies show an imbalance in the ratio of Asian female performers to others. One ad asked people to "imagine a beautiful young Oriental girl (she barely speaks any English). She's anxious to please and submit to your wildest fantasy." The stereotypes of Chinese-American women as sex objects lead to various forms of exploitation and oppression in personal, economic and political spheres. This causes considerable suffering and injustice to Chinese-American men and women that lead to loss of personal power for women.

A dramatic example of the racist and sexist attitudes and behavior of whites is the case of Esther Lau, a young Chinese immigrant living in Los Angeles, California. The case of attempted sexual exploitation by a highway patrolman reached the courts and had a lengthy trial. The incident was reported by Linda Wong in AmerAsia Journal.[30]

There are negative images of Chinese-American men as well. The American perception of nonwhite males as sexually aggressive and threatening to white women changed in regard to Asian men when they began to be "successful"; they were held up as a minority model. Author Frank Chin describes that stereotype as "...the only one that is utterly without manliness, male sexuality, potency, virility, male strengths."[31] The Asian male image became desexed to maintain the boundaries between white women and nonwhite men.

One result of these conflicting stereotypes is the tendency of Chinese-American males and females to reject each other and their own identity.

COMPARISON: This is another example of how racism used sexism to undermine a person's self-worth by attaching sexual identity in terms of (white) standards of physical beauty and conformity to (traditional Anglo) sex roles. (See the section on Sexual Exploitation and Ideals of Beauty in the African-American Women: During Slavery and Jimcrow overview.)

DISCUSSION: Have students recall the discussion of stereotypes of African-American women. What were they? Why did they develop? Ask these questions:

Can you think of any time someone tried to judge you on the basis of a stereotype? Tell or write of the incident. How did you feel about it? How did it affect you?

Have students think about the stereotypes they have of others.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Ask the class to look throughout the week for racial and sex-role stereotyping in ads for movies on T.V. and in magazines. Have them focus on main stereotypes: male, female, class, racial, cultural. Describe what the character in the ad looks like. What is s/he doing? What is stereotyped about the character?

GROUP DISCUSSION: What might be the effect on a person who feels that s/he is being stereotyped by the media on the basis of race, sex, personality characteristics, etc.? Think of a time that you felt an ad, T.V. or movie character stereotyped who you felt you were.

Search for Roots: Despite the conflicts caused by racism and sexism, Chinese-American women and men are gaining pride in their ethnic identity. Many young American-born Chinese want to learn more about their ethnic heritage. They have formed collectives and oral history projects to rewrite the story of the Chinese in America and fill the existing knowledge gap because, as Odoric Wou writes:

> Most of the early history of Chinese-Americans written so far (and there has not been too much) presents only the superstructure of the Chinese community in America. The materials historians, sociologists and popular writers utilize are chiefly those recorded in Chinese by a Chinese elite, that is, students and diplomats who only stayed briefly in this country. Their viewpoints and experiences are, to be sure, invaluable, yet highly one-sided. The vast majority of Chinese who migrated to the United States in early days were laborers. They came here to toil to provide security for their family in China. Their difficulties, frustrations and life-style, therefore, truly represent the relevant experience of the Chinese here, an experience markedly different from those of their more wealthy contemporaries. But since most of them did not write, their stories remain for the most part untold; their documents, letters and photos, treasured so much by historians, are frequently thrown away the minute they die; their experience, aspirations and outlook are buried with them in their graves.[32]

Many young people who only a decade or so ago were ashamed to speak Chinese for fear of being considered different, are now enrolling in large numbers in the various courses in Chinese language and culture offered at universities throughout the country. Mary Chu expresses her pride in her cultural heritage in the following statement:

> I take great pride in my heritage, but I am also an American citizen. I've also found an identity. I have become interested in the Asian movement. One goal is to change the stereotyped Asian image. I have a lot of interest in Chinese history and languages. Many of my friends are not studying to be engineers or computer experts, but are taking art, history, journalism and geology.
>
> Improvement of Asian communities is another goal. Voter registration, health care and housing have become a campaign for my friends and me. The majority of these friends are Asian, but I am developing a closeness to other nationalities. Realizing my Asian identity is a major breakthrough in my life.[33]

Since the United States' recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1971, and former President Nixon's visit to Peking in 1972, thousands of Chinese-Americans have visited China to reunite with family and friends, or to see their ancestral land for the first time.

One Chinese-American woman, Quan Lai Jean, a 22-year-old college graduate, went with a group of Chinese-American youths to visit China. Of her reasons for undertaking the trip, she says:

> My reasons for returning to my ancestral home were very personal. I have written this article, however, because I know American education and our own fearful families have denied many second and third generation Chinese-Americans a full heritage. Not all of us will have the privilege of returning to China, but as Chinese-Americans who are beginning to take our rightful position in a historically hostile society, we must know our own history. We have the right to know of our whole families, of our history and China today. If our Chinese-American elders will put away their dogmatic labels, forget the FBI and begin to talk about the past, there is much they can teach us...and much more that we can learn together about our ancestral homeland today. It is time for many more family reunions.[34]

With President Carter's relaxation of travel regulations for Americans visiting foreign lands, it is expected that many more Chinese-Americans will travel to China to learn about their origins.

Asian-American writers resent the stereotypes forged by whites and perpetuated by some Asians.

> They admit that they have responded to the impetus of the black movement, but they recognize that their battle is their own, long overdue. They want Asian-Americans to be liked as they are, human beings with qualities of dignity and beauty, who happen to have skin of different hue, hair darker and straighter, speech accent uniquely their own. They want white Americans to accord respect to these traits without distorting them, coloring them, or romanticizing them. They want white Americans to see beauty in the brown and yellow, and respond to their language.[35]

As they learn more about their roots, and as they gain greater pride in their ethnic heritage, Chinese-American women are realizing the full impact the immigration experience has had on their lives and on the lives of their ancestors. Knowledge of their cultural and historical background gives them added control over their lives and the forces shaping them. In addition, their new awareness will continue to be transmitted to the wider American community and will lead to a greater appreciation of Chinese-Americans and their contribution to American history and culture.

However, the fight for greater personal and ethnic power has to be augmented by achievements and struggles in both the economic and political spheres. To these we turn our attention next.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: List changes in the personal power of Chinese-American women. List the continuities in their power or lack of power.

ECONOMIC POWER

Focus Questions:

Look at the effect of economic change on women's power to:

- *work in whatever occupations they want;*
- *earn a good wage in whatever work they do;*
- *have a say in how the goods they produce or money they earn is used;*
- *have their work valued.*

List:

- *continuing limitations on women's economic power;*
- *spheres where women have more economic power than previously;*
- *factors that influenced the limit or expansion of women's economic power.*

Limitations on Earning Power: From the period of immigration until the present time, Chinese-Americans have endured constraints on their earning power. However, their options have increased considerably and their economic power has grown commensurately. Education has made it possible for thousands of Chinese-American women to work in the more prestigious and remunerative jobs that previously had been closed to them. They have been able to compete economically with other Americans on a more equitable basis and integrate themselves into the mainstream of American society. But their educational and occupational success has resulted in some stereotypes that hamper the complete elimination of sexist and racist attitudes toward Chinese-Americans generally and women in particular.

It is commonly stated that Chinese-Americans have a higher educational level and higher earning power than the white population. This is misleading because there are various forms of educational and work discrimination that still oppress Chinese-Americans. Even with a generally high educational level, their employment opportunities are still limited.

COMPARISON: Note the common misconceptions about the economic power of African-American women (see Continuity and Change section of the overview).

The limitations on employment for Chinese-American women are revealed in a 1974 HEW study based on the 1970 census. The report shows that 65 percent of all employed Chinese-American women earn less than $4,000.00 per year. Over one-third of Chinese-American women (37 percent) are sales and clerical workers. Of these women, 51 percent are American-born. Another 23 percent of Chinese-American women work as semi-skilled operatives. The majority of these are recent immigrants unable to compete for more lucrative jobs because of language barriers. Of the rest, 23 percent are employed in professional occupations.[36]

Despite the threat that the exclusion laws posed to family structure by limiting the entry of Chinese women into the U.S., Chinese-American two-parent families survived and are in the majority today. For this reason, only 7 percent of Chinese-American families are headed by women, which is the lowest percentage for any ethnic group in America.[37] Most Chinese-American women must work in order to supplement their husbands' income, which is low because of racial discrimination. Of the Chinese-American women in the San Francisco Bay Area, 51.9 percent work.[38] They cope with the pressures of combining household and parental duties with their responsibilities as wage earners.

DISCUSSION:

There is an attitude among some Americans that if a woman does not need the money, she should not work outside the home, and that the needs of her family will suffer if she does work. Discuss this attitude and the fact that it has created feelings of guilt in many women who have jobs.

Are there ways women may work without these guilt feelings?

What practical changes would need to be made if society really supported the concept of women working outside the home?

Factory and Industry Work: As we noted in the previous overview, early in this century Chinese-American women were participating in factory work within their communities. After World War I, some women received jobs in the factories of the larger community and were involved in the extensive growth of unionism in the 1930's. It was World War II, however, that increased the number of Asian women in the industrial labor force; today, Chinese-American women work in factories and industries throughout the nation.

COMPARISON: This parallels the experience of African-American women in factory work and in the union movement.

Job Discrimination Continues: Chinese women who immigrated to America come from different social classes and backgrounds; some are highly Westernized, such as the women who have come from Hong Kong, and others are from poor villages. Depending on their familiarity with Western ways and the English language, these women adapt to American culture at varying paces and their options for education or employment also vary considerably. Those who do not know English are restricted to associating with the Chinese community. As one working woman said:

> We overseas Chinese face the racist attitude and language barrier living in a foreign land. It is difficult for us to find jobs and cope with our daily needs. That's why we resort to laundry and the restaurant business or become machine operators in the sweatshops. All these jobs have long hours and low pay. Because the family budget is too great, the parents usually have to work and leave the children at home with no one to care for them.[39]

The economic exploitation of working women in the garment industry prompted the U.S. Department of Labor to investigate large numbers of factories for repeatedly failing to keep accurate wage and hour records of their employees, most of whom are women who have recently emigrated from Hong Kong and Taiwan. According to the investigation report:

> All the factories investigated were owned by Chinese. Non-Chinese-owned factories also have been investigated for discriminatory practices. In garment factories, women have to work long hours on weekdays and weekends in order to make enough money to help support their families.[40]

Not only do these women receive wages far below the legal minimum; they also can point to no record of the overtime they work (an average of 10 hours a day, 6 days a week).* The Federal investigation instigated by the International Ladies Garment Workers

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*Large white-owned garment factories pit independent Chinese contractors against each other to compete for factory bids at the lowest rates. The contractors then have to pay women low wages in order to survive.

Union (ILGWU) led to a reduction of working hours but to no significant increase in wages. Exploitation of working women continues. To avoid paying the minimum wage, for instance, manufacturers pay by the piece of garment, at a very low rate.

Some women have tolerated this exploitation because of the flexibility of working hours in the sweatshops. Mothers may leave work to pick up their children after school, may bring children to work, or may leave to cook dinner whenever they want. The working environment does provide female companionship with women who speak the same language. In part, because of these minimal advantages, Chinese-American women have only recently begun to organize to improve their working conditions.

Despite success at achieving union protection in some factories, there are many occupations in which Chinese-American women are still exploited. A young high school woman describes the working conditions in a fortune cookie factory that employs her mother, who has recently emigrated from Hong Kong and does not understand or speak English:

> After a few months, one of our relatives walked by a fortune cookie factory in Chinatown. They were looking for a Chinese worker for a fulltime job. She told my mom right away and the next few days, she was accepted. So from then on, my mom became a factory worker. In the beginning, she didn't have any thick gloves and her fingers were always burned by the hot cookies. The temperature in the factory is terribly hot, especially in the summer. It's stuffy and noisy inside. It takes a long time to practice the skill of folding and bending the cookies. During these times, the beginning workers don't get full pay. They have to wait 'til they can handle a machine all by themselves. Eight and a half hours was too much for my mom. Besides she didn't get used to the conditions there. So later, I began to go help her and became a fortune cookie worker myself.
>
> All the lady workers there have either their sons or daughters to go work for them. At first, I just sat beside her and learned to fold the cookies. After a few weeks, I knew well and began to handle the machine by myself. From then on, I worked for my mom over the weekend and whenever I could. So, she could rest for a few days. I

> met some friends there and so did my mom. But she knew them well enough, tney talked days and nights about nothing and screamed like hell when they had arguments.
>
> In my opinion, I hate this job absolutely. It did nothing good to us except harm for my health and time. My mom gets sick very often. But she can't ask for a day off unless she is very, very sick because the boss loses business on the cookies if they shut off one machine. So sometimes, she has to work even though she has a toothache. Few years ago, they all had days off on Sundays. Now, they have to work seven days a week. After work, my mom has to sweep the floor without pay. We have to make our own gloves and mend them after we go home.
>
> From noon to ten at night, this job almost takes away her whole day. It always bothers me from my school work. I asked my mom many times to quit that job, but the answer was always no. She told me that she can hardly find another job again. Besides, this job gives Kaiser insurance. She wants to stay on and struggle for it. Sometimes, it hurts me so much when I see her suffer from sickness. I work there for my mother's benefit. But all I feel is that the whole thing is just a trap.[41]

There are thousands of women who work in restaurants and laundromats to help keep the family business going. Their situation may be somewhat better than that of the factory workers, but most still suffer from oppressive economic conditions.

Changes in Economic Power: Some gains have been made in individual factories. In 1973, for example, 60 Chinese women garment workers took a stand against unfair labor practices at the San Francisco Gold Company and ultimately mobilized the whole plant of 250 Latin, Filipino, white and black workers. They won union recognition even though they met with little other success. In a letter written by their group to a local newspaper, the women expressed these thoughts: "The Chinese are not like sand which separates and cannot stay together. Our fight and its victory has proven that we are like clay which sticks together under any condition."[42]

In addition to unionization, many working women have found in cooperatives a new means of support and control over their own lives and working conditions. Becky Lee is a college-educated woman who worked full-time in a garment factory and helped the other workers form a co-op. In the following incident, she describes her struggle to educate the workers to learn about their rights. She also tells of their sudden realization that they had collective power.

> Then we really had to struggle until the older women began taking things into their own hands. The main problem that we've had in the co-op was this, getting across the feeling that it belonged to the workers. I guess when you're used to being told what to do, always being an employee, it's kind of hard to believe it when a bunch of young people just tells you, "Well, you're the boss, you control things." People don't seem to know exactly what's going on. I think, in the first couple of months, they still had the feeling of coming someplace for eight hours or so and then going home and that's it. It was still just a job to them, and whenever we'd say something, they'd always tell us it was good. So slowly we started asking, "Well, what do you think?" about this and that. And as it became clearer how obviously incompetent we were (laughs), they started offering suggestions.
>
> The first breakthrough didn't come for a couple of months. We were getting really low prices, you know, and we'd all complain together while we were working, but then when the designer or the manufacturer would come around, no one would say very much about it. At one point we were dealing with a manufacturer who was really cheap. It was a time when we had no work at all, but we had gotten some new workers and we were trying to supply them with something, just to keep going. So this cheap guy had come around five or six times to drop off orders and tell us to have them done by a certain time. Now the students were handling all the negotiating then, because we were the ones who spoke English. But by that time we'd been having shop meetings for a few months and the older women had really gotten involved a lot with the management, they were worrying about finances and whether we could keep the co-op going at all. Well, one day, after finishing one of this guy's orders, they felt they'd just about had it. He came in to pick the things up that same afternoon. And before any of us had even realized what was happening, all the ladies were standing around him and yelling in Chinese. And with what little English they had picked up in the classes here, they were

> yelling at him in English, too, telling him that the price was ridiculously cheap and that they just couldn't afford to do anything like that again. The guy was stunned, you know, he couldn't figure out what was going on. Here were these women telling him how much work had to go into these dresses, that he should pay them a higher price for them, how much he charged for them on the market, and how much he was making off their work. Suddenly this English word came up, "You're stin-gee, stin-gee" or something, the woman could barely pronounce it. But finally it dawned on the manufacturer that she was telling him he was stingy (laughs)! And he began to say, "Well, I don't know, I don't know," and finally he raised the price. And since then we've always been able to get him to raise the prices for certain orders, because the older workers have been speaking out and they don't feel the least bit self-conscious about it. When a guy comes in they just tell him, "Well, you're cheating us, that's all."[43]

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Describe the attitudes that prevented the workers from exercising their economic power.

List the ways Becky and her friends showed the workers that they had power.

Pick out the sentences that show that Becky is aware that in exercising economic power, the workers gain greater control over their lives.

Professional Work -- Continuing Stereotypes: The middle-class Chinese-American woman has also encountered the double problems of racial stereotyping and sexism. She is stereotyped as submissive and quiet. She is counselled into jobs requiring low verbal skills, such as bank teller, accountant and file clerk. Relatively few Chinese-American women work in law or sales, or as receptionists or telephone operators.[44] They are under-represented, too, in upper-echelon professional and managerial jobs, compared with white women. They are concentrated in low-level technical jobs. Although a greater percentage of Chinese-American women are college graduates than white women, only 5 percent of Chinese-American women earn more than $10,000 a year.[45]

The case of Moy, who has an M.A. in Business Administration, is an example of this job discrimination.

> Moy entered the budget department at McClellan Air Force Base near Sacramento, California, in 1955. In four years she advanced from a GS-5 to a GS-11 level but was not promoted in grade for the next nine years. In 1968, after being passed over for promotion in favor of a Caucasian with only a high school education, Moy filed a complaint first with the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer for the Department of the Air Force, and after an unfavorable ruling, with the Board of Appeals and Review, United States Civil Service Commission. The latter board ruled that Moy had been passed over for promotion because of racial discrimination and ordered that she be promoted immediately and that her supervisor be reprimanded. Although the ruling was final and not subject to appeal and dated September 24, 1969, Moy had not been promoted by December 1970. The Budget Department at McClellan Air Force Base circumvented the order by rewriting the job description of the position Moy had applied to fill.[46]

Commenting on the economic status of Asian women, Pauline Fong states:

> The stereotype of the quiet, non-troublesome Asian superimposed by stereotypes about how women should behave, wreaks havoc for Asian women who are in great need of economic equality. Stereotypes, unfortunately, work both ways. Employers who hold stereotypes about Asians and about women make it nearly impossible for Asian women to break through these barriers to find more rewarding jobs. Asian women, through their experiences, come to accept these stereotypes and we hold ourselves back from aspiring and asserting ourselves for jobs outside the traditional roles assigned us.[47]

Loss of economic power was greatest among newly immigrating professional Chinese women. The immigration laws of the 1950's made it possible for an unknown number of professional Chinese women to immigrate to the United States. Among the special problems these women faced was an inability to find employment because of language difficulties. They were often required to pass tests in order to practice their professions. Some medical doctors, for example, had to wait a long period before they could qualify for practice through competitive examinations and other required procedures. Thus, unemployment became a problem among professional Chinese immigrants, many of whom ended up working in restaurants and laundries.

New Careers: Despite the grim employment statistics, there are Chinese-American women who have overcome many obstacles and ventured into careers previously closed to them. Today, they are found in all kinds of occupations. Some Chinese-American women have been able to enter occupations such as engineering, graphic arts, and law. Many women who become lawyers specialize in immigration cases to help other Chinese.

Several prominent women writers have given intimate glimpses of life in Chinese-American families. These women have written autobiographies revealing the dilemmas of growing up female and Chinese-American. Among these are Jade Snow Wong, Dianna Chang, and, most recently, Maxine Hong Kingston. Kingston's book, The Woman Warrior, became a bestseller and won the National Book Critics Circle Award as the best non-fiction book of 1976. Betty Lee Sung presented a comprehensive picture of the Chinese-American experience in The Story of the Chinese in America. Others have written articles, poems and short stories that provide deep insight into the feelings and life experiences of Chinese-American women. The material in the journal Asian Women provides a good example of their work. May Chee tells how she became a ceramicist:

> When I was growing up I thought about becoming a ballerina. Later I bought a beauty shop, but I liked working in Kress better. I got married, and when the children were growing up, I'd send them to bed and then stay up and put up chairs and scrub the floor and after quite a number of years I felt like a slave to the house and thought, "What is my life coming to?"
>
> And then, I began to think about myself and I felt like a free soul, in spite of my Chinese upbringing!
>
> By then, I was already interested in ceramics; at first, I thought ceramics was something to keep you busy. But there is something about ceramics that "feels good," something satisfying about getting your hands in clay...in this icky stuff to

> make something useful or beautiful, and it must have been the same things that in every civilization made people work with clay, whether they came from Africa, China or South America. Even if you're not feeling artistic, you'll never know what will happen until you try, give it a chance...if you don't bother to touch the clay, poke it, pinch it, stretch it, you won't know what you can do with it...and that's the way it is with life; if you leave it alone, nothing will happen to you...you need to keep your mind open, and give it a try; pinch off a bit of life and squeeze it through your hands.[48]

Pianists such as Tung Kwong-Kwong, and several actresses such as Anna May Wong, Arabella Hong and Nancy Kwan have come from the Chinese-American community. A report by Shien-Woo Kung in 1962 describes their accomplishments:

> Arabella Hong, a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music, made her Broadway debut in Flower Drum Song; she has won several major awards for her performances in concert and in opera... Nancy Kwan, daughter of a Scottish fashion model and a Chinese architect, played the movie role of Suzie Wong. She has recently been assigned the top feminine role in the screen version of Flower Drum Song (1961).[49]

Unfortunately, some of these actresses have played roles that contributed to the perpetuation of the stereotypes of Chinese-American women.

COMPARISON: Third World actresses generally have experienced similar stereotyping.

POLITICAL POWER

Focus Questions:

- *Has there been a change in society's political expectations of Chinese-American women?*
- *Are there continuing barriers to the political participation of Chinese-American women?*
- *What is the nature of Chinese-American women's current political participation?*
- *What are the similarities and differences between the political power of Chinese-American women and women of other cultures?*

Continuing Barriers: We have pointed out how Chinese-American women, as well as men, were deprived of political power by harsh immigration laws and other discriminatory practices and attitudes. These exclusion laws had a long-lasting negative effect on the political participation of Chinese-Americans, especially women. March Fong Eu, the California Secretary of State, voiced the opinion that the laws "have had a stifling effect upon Asian women's current participation in law and politics."[50]

Another factor that discouraged women from entering politics was the wave of anti-Chinese feelings in the 1950's. The establishment of Communism in the 1950's in China, the invervention of Chinese troops in the Korean War, and the increase of Chinese refugees helped produce this new anti-Chinese fervor. Chinese-Americans found it expedient to keep a "low profile" politically, since those who continued to speak out often found themselves accused of having Communist leanings.

For women there have been other barriers as well. March Fong Eu mentions two more factors: the fear of the loss of economic security which most political candidates risk, and the still-prevalent traditional notion that the place of women is in the home.[51]

STUDENT ACTIVITY: The class could discuss why they think American women from all cultures are under-represented in political life. Have them examine the newspapers for one week, counting the number of times they find women who are politically involved as opposed to the number of times men are mentioned. Are any Third World women mentioned? What are the women reported doing? What are the men reported doing?

Women Get Involved: It has only been in the past two decades, and especially since the civil rights movements, that Asian-Americans have generally begun to confront the oppressive practices and attitudes from which they have suffered. They have felt the need to stick together as an ethnic minority and agitate for changes in the socio-economic and political conditions that affect their communities and the wider society. Various political groups, formed at the local, state and national levels, have urged all Asian-Americans to become politically involved and particularly to vote in elections and run for public office. Women have responded by participating, in small numbers, in the various Asian political groups as well as in other political organizations. A few Chinese-American women have run for political office and some have won the battle. Ying Lee Kelly, a councilwoman in Berkeley, California, has been active in city politics for several years. March Fong Eu became the first woman secretary of state in California. As a dynamic, vocal, and capable politician, she has become a role model for young Chinese-American and Asian-American women generally.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Ask students to gather information on the political participation of Chinese-American women in their own communities.

There are also women who have become involved in politics at the national level. Although their number is small, they have achieved considerable political power among Asian-Americans generally. One such woman is political organizer Esther Kee.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Read the following article about Esther Kee and discuss these questions. Why did she become involved in politics? What satisfaction does she receive from this participation? What barriers does she face in politics and how does she overcome them?

> When we visited Esther Kee at her east side New York apartment the other day, we wanted to talk to her about her role as the East Coast Coordinator of the Asian Pacific American Unit in the Carter/Mondale campaign and how she felt being a member of the Minority Affairs Unit of the Carter Transition Team.

The 1976 political campaigns were an exciting time for most Asian Americans. It was the first time that the Asian American communities were visibly involved (at least to a certain extent) in different political campaigns throughout the country. All the major Asian American communities in the country got doused with some politics, mostly local politics, but some national politics too. For Esther Kee, who has been involved in various political campaigns for Democrats since Adlai Stevenson, the extent of the Asian American community involvement was encouraging. "I never thought the campaign would be on such a large scale."

Mrs. Kee first became concerned about the lack of Asian American involvement and representation in different political organizations and activities when she realized through her association with the Women's Political Caucus during the 1976 campaign that the Caucus did not have Asian Americans listed as a minority. The Caucus listed blacks and Hispanics as minority groups, but not Asian Americans. "When I only saw a few isolated Asian faces at the Convention I said to myself, 'This cannot be! We have to become involved and very committed.'"

We asked her about her involvement, now that the political campaigns were over. "What does it mean now that I'm involved? What am I in it for? This might start a spark in not only me but everybody else because I think it's been too long that we've waited for somebody else to do it." Mrs. Kee explained that her concern in the Carter/Mondale campaign as the East Coast Coordinator was to do her best in keeping the door open for Asian Americans. "And I hope that other Asian Americans will follow in and take over!"

"I'm motivated. Politics is exciting! . . . I'm learning a lot, but most Asian Americans have no chance to learn...but they have to get involved. They can't wait for someone to call. They have to find their own chance!"

"...I'm not an intellectual. I don't profess to know everything...I don't think one has to be an intellectual to get involved in politics, but one has to have a feeling for people and enjoy meeting people! I like meeting people. I like getting them enthusiastic and saying, 'Come on let's do it!' "

"As the East Coast Coordinator, I did the best I could with the limited time I had. I made some outreach to the people whether they were old or young or middle aged...There are a lot more out there who want to be more politically active and they don't know how. But this is just the beginning. There was a tremendous drive to get out the vote. I think that by the next election there will be a lot said about the votes that we have that can be counted, and people will hear us."

We then mentioned that one of our main concerns was about political involvement at the local level. We've always felt that local level participation was a priority, because Asian Americans could achieve the most visibility at that level. But we've been convinced that even on the local level government agencies were very insulated and had no realistic concept about the basic needs of our communities. Mrs. Kee agreed. So we asked her how Asian Americans can effectively organize themselves so that they can become an input into the policy-making functions at the local level. We explained that there seemed to be a vacuum of leadership among Asian Americans. Many Asian Americans were too sensitive to criticism and didn't want to learn how to accept criticism even if it were positive criticism.

"You know sometimes when I got criticized there were days in the campaign when I just cried. But you know...it's good, because I came up fighting. But we have to learn how to absorb criticism in a positive way."

She felt that Asians not only criticize each other, but like to knock each other down. "And I'm very sad to see that happen. I think it's nice that we criticize and accept criticism, but I don't think that we should go chopping someone down just because someone is making headway."[52]

COMPARISON: The sense of some American women that they need to be involved in politics in order to effect change is cross-cultural. A comparison of the Esther Kee article and the Fannie Lou Hamer article ("The Woman Who Changed The South," African-American Women: Continuity and Change overview) shows this awareness: Fannie Lou Hamer says "The air you breath is politics. So you have to be involved." Esther Kee: "We (Asian-Americans) have to become involved and very committed." Films that show women in politics might be used at this point.

Women Use Other Political Avenues: There are ways other than seeking office that allow women to become politically involved. There is a growing number of Chinese-American women who are graduating from law school and who are using their training to help the Asian community -- by specializing in immigration cases, for example. Many are getting involved in cooperatives and collectives -- organizations that often deal with political issues. As the number of these collectives increases throughout the country, women are a driving force in their initiation and operation.

DISCUSSION:

Can students think of self-help organizations in their communities that might have been started by women, are primarily staffed by women or are established for the special needs of women? Do the students consider these people to be political?

Although there is a feeling among some Chinese-Americans that a law background is necessary to be in politics, there are a few who have become politically involved through women's organizations at both the local and national levels. For instance, Sandy Ouye, a a dietician, is on the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women.

The Style of Political Power: How do Chinese-American women politicians use their power? What has been their style? It is very difficult to generalize in this regard since each individual's style may differ considerably from others. California's Secretary of State March Fong Eu declares that she has advocated bilingual and women's legislation at a "low profile" level and that "cause" issues have not won her the position of secretary of state.[53]

Other Asian women look at political participation in its widest sense -- that is, the day-to-day decisions affecting one's family, working conditions and rights. This is the view of Pat Sumi, lecturer at the University of California at Santa Cruz. She states that Asian women have participated in politics "because of the realities of who we are."[54]

Sumi points out that many Asian-American families are headed by women whose struggle for survival is expressed by agitation for better wages and working conditions in the garment industries, for children's rights, bilingual education, and by Third-World strikes on college campuses. This is in addition to important political issues specific to and supported by the Asian community. Sumi's definition of politics is "the expression of the aspirations of the people."[55]

Notes

[1] Victor Nee and Brett de Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ': a documentary history of an American Chinatown* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Sentry Edition, 1974), p. 155.

[2] Rose Lee, *The Chinese in the United States of America* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), p. 201.

[3] Stanford Lyman, "Strangers in the City: The Chinese in the Urban Frontier," in Tachiki, et al., eds,, *Roots: an Asian American reader* (Los Angeles: University of California, Asian American Studies Center, 1971), p. 166.

[4] Nee and Nee, *Op*. *cit*., p. xxiii.

[5] Stanford Lyman, *Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 147.

[6] Betty Sung, *The Story of the Chinese in America* (New York: Collier Books, 1971), pp. 148-149.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 125.

[8] Nee and Nee, *Op*. *cit*., p. xxvi.

[9] *Ibid*., pp. 326-327.

[10] Sung, *Op*. *cit*., p. 157.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 158.

[12] Harriet Noble, "Emigration from New York to Michigan," in Cott, ed., *Root of bitterness* (New York: Dutton, 1972), p. 227.

[13] Sung, *Op*. *cit*., p. 162.

[14] *Ibid*.

[15] *Ibid*., pp. 198-199.

[16] *Ibid*., pp. 158-159.

[17] Lee, *Op*. *cit*., pp. 206-207.

[18] Asian Writers Project, *Sojourner IV* (Berkeley: Berkeley Unified School District, 1974), n.p.

[19] Shirley Sun, *Three generations of Chinese--east and west* (Oakland: The Oakland Museum, 1973), p. 35.

[20] Sung, *Op*. *cit*., pp. 263-264.

[21] Sung, *Op*. *cit*., p. 175.

[22] *La Razon Mestiza II*, Special Edition (Summer 1976), p. 19.

[23] *Ibid*.

[24] Melford Weiss, "Selective Acculturation and the Dating Process," in *Roots*, pp. 37-43.

[25] Sung, *Op*. *cit*., p. 259.

[26] Jan Masaoka, "I Forgot My Eyes Were Black," in *Asian women* (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), pp. 57-58.

[27] Masaoka, *Op*. *cit*., p. 58.

[28] Ron Tanaka, "I Hate My Wife For Her Flat Yellow Face," in *Roots*, p. 46-47.

[29] Evelyn Yoshimura, "GI's and Asian Women," in *Roots*, p. 29.

[30] Linda Wong, "The Esther Lau Trial: A Case Study of Oppression and Sexism," *AmerAsia Journal*, 3:1 (Summer 1975), pp. 16-26.

[31] Amy Tachiki, "Introduction," in *Roots*, p. 3.

[32] Odoric Wou, et al., "Chinatown Oral History Project," *Bridge* 2:5 (June 1973), p. 23.

[33] Mary Chu, "A Laundryman's Daughter," *Bridge*, 2:2 (December 1972), p. 18.

[34] Quan Lai Jean, "Bak Hop Chuen, Hoiping," in eds., Marcia Chan and Candice Chan, Going back (Los Angeles: University of California, Asian American Studies Center, 1973), p. 33.

[35] Kai-Yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas, eds., Asian American authors (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), p. 5.

[36] Bureau of the Census, "We, the Asian Americans" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June, 1973).

[37] Verna Abe, "Stats on the Sisters," Asian American Women, p. 4.

[38] Bureau of the Census, "Subject Report on Japanese, Chinese and Filipinos in the United States: 1970 Census of the Population" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Social and Economic Statistics Administration, 1970).

[39] Chinese-American workers: past and present (San Francisco: Getting Together, 1970), p. 55.

[40] Ibid., pp. 56-57.

[41] "Just a Trap," in Asian Writers Project, Sojourner IV (Berkeley: Berkeley Unified School District, 1974), n.p.

[42] Wei Min Sh'e Labor Committee, Chinese working people in America: a pictorial history (San Francisco, United Front Press, 1974), p. 65.

[43] Nee and Nee, Op. cit., pp. 367-368.

[44] Phyllis Tang, "Chinese American Women in Non-Traditional Jobs," Unpublished slide presentation, San Francisco State University, 1976.

[45] Abe, Op. cit., p. 5.

[46] Lyman, Chinese Americans, p. 146.

[47] Pauline Fong, Economic Status of Asian Women. Paper read to the Women's Educational Equity Act Council, San Francisco, February 1976.

[48] Lehua Lopez, Changing images...working women in Hawaii (Honolulu: General Assistance Center for the Pacific, 1976), p. 13.

[49] Shien-woo Kung, *Chinese in American life: some aspects of their history, status, problems and contributions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), pp. 249-250.

[50] *San Francisco Journal*, 1:30 (April 1977), p. 1.

[51] *Ibid*.

[52] *Bridge: An Asian American Perspective*, 3:1 (April 1977), pp. 10-11.

[53] *San Francisco Journal*. *Op*. *cit*., p. 1.

[54] *Ibid*.

[55] *Ibid*.

[56] Elizabeth Sutherland, "Colonized women: The Chicana," in HEW Spanish-speaking Women's Concerns Group, *Recommendations to HEW women's action group*, March 1972, pp. 96-97.

Student Learning Materials

Continuity and Change

Asian women. Berkeley: University of California, 1971. 144 pp. Paper. $3.50.

A collection of articles, poems, photographs and graphics by and for Asian women. Divided into four sections: herstory, reflections, Third World women, politics of womanhood. Good annotated bibliography.

- Masaoka, Jan. "I forgot my eyes were black" (pp. 57-59).

  Discusses the impact of white standards of beauty on her self-concept, as well as the effects of racism and sexism in our capitalist society.

Asian Writers Project. Sojourner IV. Berkeley: Berkeley Unified School District, 1974. Not paged. Paper. $3.00, plus postage and handling, from Asian American Bilingual Center, 2168 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704.

A collection of writing by Asian-American high school students. Poetry and prose, some bilingual; photographs. Personal, also politically aware.

- "Kidnapped"

  A story in free verse of a Chinese woman kidnapped and sold to another Chinese family, later married by the family to a man she doesn't love and brought by him to San Francisco. Her life of "sadness, tragedy and grief" continues in America.

Chan, Marcia and Chan, Candice. Going back. Los Angeles: University of California, Asian American Studies Center, 1973. 133 pp. Paper. $2.50 from the Center, 3232 Campbell Hall, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

Articles by a group of young Chinese-Americans who visited China. Some material is in Chinese. Photos and graphics. Biographical sketches of the participants, a short list of suggested readings, and suggestions for other Chinese-Americans wanting to visit China round out the book.

- Jean, Quan Lai. "Bak Hop Chuen, Hoiping" (pp. 17-33).

  "Twenty-six years after my mother left China, I, a 22-year-old college graduate, was returning to the family home." This is a moving account of her encounter with her relatives, especially her 93-year-old grandmother.

Chu, Mary. "A laundryman's daughter," Bridge, 2:2 (December 1972), pp. 16-18.

A Chinese-American woman appreciates her parents, while acknowledging conflicts with them over her more American values. She finds an integrated identity in the Asian-American movement.

Hsu, Kai-Yu and Palubinskas, Helen, eds. Asian American authors. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972. 184 pp. Paper. $3.08.

An anthology with introductory material, biographical information and discussion questions. Selections from Wong's Fifth Chinese daughter and Chang's The frontiers of love are relevant reading materials, as is the following:

- Chan, Jeffrey Paul. "Auntie Tsia lays dying" (pp. 76-85).

  A short story about an old Chinese-American woman who has a tropical fish store in San Francisco's Chinatown during World War II. It recalls the status of women in China (kite episode) and the hardship of life there (references to famine, war, disease), and reveals the sexism and racism which her tourist customers display in San Francisco. At the end, as Auntie Tsia lays slowly dying in the hospital, the narrator -- a young man -- feels "lost" and "guilty," suggesting, perhaps, that she was more important to him than he had realized or let her know, as a connection to his "roots" and as a symbol of strength. Well-written, but style may be too sophisticated for some students.

Nee, Victor and Nee, Brett. Longtime Californ': a documentary history of an American Chinatown. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Sentry Edition, 1974. 411 pp. Paper. $4.75.

An examination of the past and present of San Francisco's Chinatown. Introduction describes Chinatown -- how it began, who lives there, housing, health, education and worship. More history and observations are interspersed among the many interviews which largely comprise this book. Quite a few women are included.

- "May Low, 38" (pp. 171-177).

  May Low is raised in China by her mother, while her father, a cook, sends money from America. Her mother socializes her early to the female role of subservience to her brother. May Low comes to the U.S. in 1949, whereupon the reading deals with her adjustment to her new life and her later conflicts with her parents.

- "Mrs. Wong, 35" (pp. 266-268).

  Mrs. Wong and her family are recent arrivals in the U.S. They earn their living first by picking in the fields near Fresno, then move to San Francisco. Mrs. Wong has 10 children. Her hard life, her lack of English, her isolation and her total involvement with her children are common experiences for Chinese immigrants.

- "The Jennie Lew case" (pp. 290-295).

  Jennie Lew discusses her work in a garment factory and the way in which working conditions, coupled with family responsibilities led to her physical breakdown and a landmark court case against her employer.

- "Sharon Yu, 20" (pp. 324-328).
  A young Chinese-American law student tells of her growing up and her education. Confirms the stereotype of Chinese children's hard work and competitiveness, but it is pleasant reading and an example of Chinese-American women venturing into non-traditional fields.
- "Becky Lee, 22" (pp. 365-370).
  A U.C. Berkeley graduate, she works in a garment factory and organizes the workers into a cooperative. The women who run the cooperative gain social, economic and political power, enabling them to overcome exploitation by the factory managers.
- "Mrs. Chow, 37" (p. 370).
- "Mrs. Lee, 36" (pp. 370-371).
  Two members of the cooperative describe their attitudes towards this part of their lives.

Wong, Jade Snow. No Chinese stranger. New York: Harper & Row, 1975. 366 pp. Hardcover. $10.95.

A sequel to Fifth Chinese daughter, includes a trip to China. We did not see this book. Focus called it "a many-faceted memoir, at once informative, outspoken, and warmly personal. Recommended." (Focus no. 35 [Autumn 1975], 30.)

Audiovisuals: films

Recommended

From spikes to spindles: a history of the Chinese in New York. 1976. Third World Newsreel. Color. 50 minutes. $80 rental from Newsreel, 630 Natoma, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Show this after the overview, not before. Begins with present time and flashes back on history. Discusses current immigration situation, reveals continued racism. Underlines common oppression with other minorities and workers today, destroys myth of passiveness. Both older and younger women talk about their lives. Well-done.

Making up. 1974. Chonk Moonhunter Productions. Color. 3 minutes. $15 rental from the producer, 2721 Bellaire Place, Oakland, CA 94601.

"A satire in which Asian women are frantically applying make-up...to assume the coveted Caucasoid look." (Producer's catalog.) If you don't believe the commentary, Chonk Moonhunter Productions will send you the Max Factor article in Jade magazine (1974) from which the words are taken.

Because this is a very short film, you can combine it with the film Beauty knows no pain or the videotape Year of the Ox for a program on beauty.

Previewed, but not recommended

Chinatown, our home. 1971. KGO and CMC. Black and white. 60 minutes. $20 rental from Chinese for Affirmative Action, 950 Stockton, San Francisco, CA 94111.

"A Cantonese drama depicting the many problems faced by an immigrant family in Chinatown. English subtitles." (CAA catalog.) Although the content of this film is relevant, we found that: it is too long for classroom use, especially when dialogue and camera work seem stilted, styles seem dated, and the story unfolds so slowly that students may lose interest.

Sleepwalker. n.d. Laura Ho. Black and white. 13 minutes. $20.00 rental from UCLA Media Center Film Library, 8 Royce Hall, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

"An Asian woman deals with growing up American. Wordless sound track, enabling the film to be universally understood." (Nakanishi and Embrey, comps., p. 5).

Unfortunately, this film seems to be so "artistic" that its meaning is lost.

Audiovisuals: filmstrips

Recommended with qualification

The other American minorities: part I. 1973. Teaching Resources Films. Color. $55.00 purchase, 4 filmstrips, 2 LP records, teacher's guide. $59.00 purchase, 4 filmstrips, 2 cassettes, teacher's guide. NYT104R (records). NYT104C (cassettes).

Covering American Indians, Mexican-Americans, Cubans and Puerto Ricans in the U.S., and Oriental-Americans, these filmstrips stress each group's emerging activism. They discuss how each group has been treated in the past, its current situation, and how it is organizing to improve its circumstances. (Social Studies School Service Catalog, 1977, p. 106.)

Audiovisuals: videotapes

Chinatown celebration of International Women's Day. 1973. Black and white. Two 30-minute tapes. $30.00 deposit for 1/2" videoreels; $10.00 returned. $40.00 deposit for 3/4" videocassettes; $20.00 returned. Request from Chinese for Affirmative Action, 950 Stockton, San Francisco, CA 94111.

A tribute to the contributions women have made at home, at work, in our society and in our culture. Tape 1 includes: tribute to I.W.D.; Chinese folk music; "Moon goddess," a shadow play; martial art; and "Modern women," a skit. Tape 2 includes: labor laws; "Our women," a skit; "What have women done"; "The little doctor," a skit; and "Stand up." We were unable to see these tapes.

Lee Mah-Jung Sai labor struggles. 1974. KQED. Color. 10 minutes. 3/4" videocassette. $20.00 deposit; $10.00 returned. Request from Chinese for Affirmative Action. Address above.

Report by Clifford Choi about the history of Chinese laborers in California, emphasizing the struggle to unionize at the Jung Sai garment factory and the Lee Mah electronics plant. (CAA Catalog.) Not previewed.

Portraits of three Chinese-American women. 1973. KQED and CMC. Black and white. 30 minutes. $15.00 deposit; $5.00 returned, for 1/2" videoreel. $20.00 deposit, $10.00 returned, for 3/4" videocassette. Request from Chinese for Affirmative Action. Address above.

Made for young adults to demonstrate the use of oral history material and to document Asian-American women of widely varying ages and experiences, each talking about her own life. The dialogue moves fast and sometimes overlaps, so it is not always readily understandable. Since the presentation takes up only the first half of the tape, however, it could be played several times for greater clarity.

This tape can also be used to demonstrate one way students can elaborate on the oral histories they will gather.

Year of the ox: the Chinatown livestock show of 1973. CMC. 30 minutes. Request from Chinese for Affirmative Action. Address above. Also available from Chonk Moonhunter Productions, address above.

A beauty pageant first conceived to bring tourists and business into Chinatown. Many of the judges are men; women judges are cosmetic experts. Susan Ng entered as a gift to her mother. Linda Fung entered because she always wanted to be in a beauty pageant. She does not speak Chinese, is not interested in women's liberation and would like to enter the Miss America contest. Her act in the pageant is an American dance. Not previewed.

This may be a good complement to Beauty knows no pain and Making up.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWING

Introduction

Oral history is a "systematic collection, arrangement, preservation and publication of recorded verbatim accounts and opinions of people who were witnesses to or participants in events likely to interest future scholars."[1] It differs from autobiography or journalistic interviews in its scope and intent. Oral history is intended to personalize and fill in the gaps of history as it is written, with its emphasis on dates and documents and movements. For example, it provides future readers and researchers with a portrait of a president and his administration drawn by those who knew him and worked with him; or with a picture of the depression through accounts of those who survived it; or with the women's suffrage movement from the perspectives of the women who were part of it.

The interview has been used for a long time as a way of gathering historical information from people or cultures that do not have a written language. Anthropologists traditionally have used this technique to learn about cultures whose history lives in the stories and songs that are passed down from generation to generation. Without this kind of recording of people's recollections, the history of many African and most Native American groups would be lost to those outside the culture.

In the late 19th century, H. H. Bancroft and a team of researchers transcribed the recollections of many people about the history of the United States. This technique of recording history, however, was not given full credence by traditional historians until many years after Allan Nevins established the Oral History Research Office at Columbia University in 1948.[2] In 1967, the national Oral History Association was formed*, which established procedures for collecting and preserving oral history.

The Oral History Interviewing unit of Sources of Strength introduces students to some of the techniques used in gathering an oral history. Students will not have the time or training necessary to produce a document that meets the stringent qualifications of an oral history interview, but they will participate in the rich experience of hearing history told from the perspective of one who lived it.

The Oral History Interviewing unit shifts the curriculum focus from the lives of women in autobiographical accounts and fiction to the lives of women known personally by students. The goals of the unit are for students to become aware of the diversity of life experiences of women, to look at the expectations these women had for themselves and how those expectations may have changed throughout their lives, and to identify influences on their decisions and actions. To reach these goals, students will learn how to prepare for and conduct a comfortable interview, interview an older woman in their family or community, transcribe and analyze the interview and make a presentation to the class. The interview process can open up communication between two or three generations, and can create a new respect and appreciation in adolescents for the strength and variety of experiences of the women they know.

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*For information and publications, write to the Oral History Association, Waterman Building, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont 05401.

Although this unit of the curriculum is designed to be completed in three weeks, it is entirely possible to devote at least a full semester to an oral history project. Eliot Wigginton, editor of the Foxfire books, has worked with high school students from the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School in Appalachian Georgia for ten years to conduct and compile oral history interviews with people in their community about their skills, crafts, and lifestyles. The Foxfire project has been replicated by schools all over the United States; some universities as well offer courses in oral history. If you and your students are interested in spending a longer time on oral history, some of the books annotated in the Oral History Teacher Background Materials section of the Bibliography will be helpful.

Notes

[1] William Moss, Oral history program manual (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 7.

[2] Van Hastings Garner, Oral history: a new experience in learning (Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum Publishing, 1975), p. 6.

Activities

Defining Oral History

In this section students will:

(1) *define oral history and its purpose, and*

(2) *discuss an example of an oral history in terms of the information contained in an interview and of the interview process.*

1. Oral history example

Show students an example of an oral history. There are many alternatives to choose from:

- Show a film (An Old-Fashioned Woman or Union Maids*);
- Play an audiotape ("Margaret" or "Guadelupe," oral history audiotapes that accompany the Teacher's Guide);
- Have students read an interview aloud (the transcripts of interviews with Guadelupe and Margaret, pages 659, 669, or interviews printed in the book by Van Hastings Garner, Oral history: a new experience in learning;* or excerpts from any of the homework reading selections).

2. Discussion

A. Ask students to think for a few minutes about what they learned about the narrator of the oral history they saw/heard and the times in which she lived. Ask them to say quickly all the things they can remember about the woman as you write them on the board. They should mention things like age, ethnicity, class of the narrator, information about her family, where she lived, when she lived, what she considered important in life, her likes/dislikes, what reasons she gave for doing what she did -- everything students can remember.

If students feel her life has nothing to do with them because her background and experiences are different from their own, help them to see what is common to her experience and the experiences of their own grandparents or parents. Does she remind them of any adult(s) they know?

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*Annotated at the end of the Oral History Interviewing unit.

B. Then ask them to identify the major events in her life or decisions she made (e.g., did she go to school, to college, did she marry, did she work, did she have children, did she leave her home, etc.). Write them on the board, or put a mark next to them if they have already been listed.

C. Now go down the list of major events (life choices or decisions) on the chalkboard, and ask what influenced each of those decisions: history and culture, or personal choice. For example, if the woman married, was it arranged for her because of social (cultural) expectations; was it a decision she made because this was what she wanted for herself; did she marry because she needed someone to support her, etc.?

Spend as much time as necessary on this part of the discussion so students will be able to identify major life decisions/choices made by women, and to understand that decisions are often controlled or influenced by forces other than personal choice. Students will analyze in this way the oral histories they are reading for homework as well as the oral history interview they will do themselves.

3. Definition

A. Discuss the use of oral history with students, using the following questions as guidelines:

- What did you like and/or dislike about this method of recounting history?
- How is the oral history you saw/read yesterday similar to and different from the autobiographical selections or first-person accounts you read for Cultural Comparisons?
- What do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of each method (e.g., what can you learn from an oral history that you might not learn from an autobiography)?
- In what situations would you want to use an oral history interview to record history (e.g., with people who cannot write or do not have a tradition of written history; with the "forgotten" people -- women, ethnic minorities -- who do not appear in history books)?

B. Discuss the role of the interviewer in doing an oral history. Depending on the example you used in class, it may not be obvious what questions the interviewer, or writer, asked; students will have to infer them from the information given by the narrator. It will be important for students to begin to understand the role of the interviewer in preparation for the interviews they will conduct themselves. Use the following questions as guidelines:

- How much did the interviewer seem to know about the life and/or times of the narrator?
- Did the interviewer seem to focus the interview on a particular time or event?
- Did the interviewer seem to use prepared questions? If so, what were some of the questions?
- What kinds of responses did the narrator give to those questions (long informative responses, yes/no, rambling, etc.)?

Write on the blackboard things the interviewer does or is responsible for as students mention them.

C. Ask students to come up with a definition of oral history -- using their memory of the oral history example, their notes, the discussions from previous classes, and the reading they are doing for homework.

Preparing for the Interview

In this section, students will:

(1) learn how to conduct an oral history interview, and

(2) choose a woman to interview.

1. Introduction

Tell students how they will spend the next two weeks: choosing a woman they know whom they want to interview, learning some interviewing skills by practicing with a partner in class, and doing the interview. Describe briefly how they will record their interviews, or, if possible, give them a choice of several methods, and say that you will go into detail about recording next week. After each student completes her/his interview, s/he will spend time putting together the oral history, learning how to analyze it, and reporting to the class.

You will need to decide the following points before you hold this discussion:

- Whether you want students to interview by themselves or in a team of two. We feel the team approach is preferable because of the support students can give each other, and because one person can take notes or record while the other gives full attention to interviewing the subject.

- How you want students to record the interview. There are several methods, depending on availability of recording equipment in the school or district, and -- if possible -- on student preference. These methods include audiotaping, note-taking, videotaping, and filming. Audiotaping is preferable if enough recorders are available.

  Note: We recommend that each student interview the woman s/he chooses twice, about 45 minutes for each interview. During the first session the student will also fill out a sheet of biographical information, and get a consent form signed by the subject. If you decide to use a team approach, each team will therefore conduct four interviews. However, it may be inconvenient to divide the time up; a single interview would therefore take about 1½ hours, and each team would conduct two interviews.

2. Purpose

Discuss why students are going to do an oral history. Ask them what they would like to find out about women who are their mother's or grandmother's age. Have them remember what they learned about the women they read about, heard on tape, or saw on film, and what interested them the most in those accounts.

There are many reasons that might be chosen for this unique communication between two or three generations: to find out what women have done in their lives; to discover the strength it took to live; to learn what decisions women made and why; to know what historical events they lived through. One will not find this information or these women's viewpoints in textbooks.

You may want the whole class to work with the same focus, or for each person to choose her/his own particular agenda.

3. Whom to Interview

Ask students to begin thinking about whom they want to interview. Some points they should consider in making their choices are:

- Will s/he be comfortable asking questions which are personal?

- Will the interviewee be likely to respond to questions in an informative way, rather than with short answers?
- Does the student know enough about her life to ask informed questions?

4. Homework

Give students this assignment:

> Ask the woman you want to interview if she's interested and willing to be interviewed. Explain to her why you're doing the interview, how long it will take and what will be done with it. Ask her permission for your partner to be present to take notes or record. Make sure she understands that if she does not like the interview or wants part of it erased, that you won't use it or won't use her name.

5. Interview Questions

Ask students to write down five things they know about the woman they are going to interview. Then ask them to write down ten things they do not know about her and would like to ask.

During Cultural Comparisons, students looked at women's lives in terms of the expectations they had and the decisions they made during their lives, and the influences on those expectations and decisions. Students will be analyzing their own interviews with this focus as well, and should keep this in mind when they plan their interview questions. For example, if the woman says she was married when she was 18, the interviewer could then ask how she decided to marry (was it arranged by parents, expected by society, a way of getting away from home, because she fell in love, etc.).

Next, ask students to write these ten points in question form in the order they plan to ask them. Collect their questions so that you can return them with suggestions or comments.

6. Steps to Follow

Give students the sheet of Steps to Follow for Conducting an Oral History Interview. Ask them to read it over, and spend some time answering questions about it.

STEPS TO FOLLOW FOR CONDUCTING AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

1. Decide whom you want to interview: a woman you know (relative, an older friend, a woman from your neighborhood or community).

2. Explain to the woman you decide to interview the purpose of the interview and the length of time it will take. Ask if she's willing to have you interview her, and if your team partner may be present to record notes (if you are working in teams).

3. Choose a partner from class to work with when you interview. Each of you will have a turn at interviewing and at recording.

4. Decide which method of recording to use (audiotape, notes, videotape, film).

5. Write questions for the interview. Focus on the main events and decisions she has made in her life. Check questions with the teacher.

6. Schedule an appointment with the woman you will interview for about one 1 1/2 hour session, or for two 45-minute sessions.

7. Practice the interview in class with your partner. Take turns being the interviewer and being the interviewee.

8. Give each other feedback on the interview. Listen to the recording or read over the notes to make sure they are clear and have all the information you want to get.

9. Decide on the method you want to use to transcribe your interview (verbatim, paraphrasing, all of it or in parts, etc.).

10. Conduct your interview:

    - test the equipment if you're using any;
    - fill out the biographical information sheet;
    - after the interview, ask if there is any information she wishes to be confidential, or anything she wants to erase from the tape;
    - ask if you may use her name when you report on the interview.

11. Listen to the tape after you have left the person you interviewed, or read your partner's notes for clarity and content. If there is something you can't remember or think you missed, ask the interviewee about it.

12. Transcribe the interview using the method you've chosen.

13. Report to the class on your interview.

14. Create your final oral history report.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Date of interview ______________________ Length of interview ________

Place of interview ____

Method of recording interview ______________________________

Name of interviewer ______________________________________

Name of recorder ____

Name of narrator (person interviewed) ______________________

Address of narrator _______________________________________

____

Birth date of narrator ____________________________________

Birth place of narrator ___________________________________

Occupation(s) of narrator _________________________________

____

Birth place of narrator's mother ___________________________

Occupation(s) of narrator's mother _________________________

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Birth place of narrator's father ___________________________

Occupation(s) of narrator's father _________________________

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Conducting the Interview

In this section, students will:

(1) choose a partner to work with,

(2) practice conducting an interview,

(3) give/get feedback and revise interview questions, and

(4) conduct an oral history interview.

1. Practice

Ask students to choose a partner to work with in class to practice interviewing. If you have decided to have them work in teams on their "real" interviews, tell them they will do so. Pass back the interview questions you collected, and ask students to revise them or finish them -- as necessary -- for homework.

Explain the process that will be followed in class: each student will do one practice interview with her/his partner using the questions they've written; they will give each other feedback, and on the basis of the feedback will revise their questions or technique.

You may first need to spend one whole class period discussing the interview format and answering questions. If students are going to audiotape, make sure they know how to use the recorder. Since many classrooms have only one electricity outlet, you will either need to have several extension cords or have batteries in the recorders for the practice interview.

Before they group into teams, stress the following: ask only one question at a time, and wait long enough for the interviewee to think about her answer before she gives it; don't answer the question yourself, and don't ask leading questions. It is very difficult to keep silent after asking a question, and very important to do so for a good interview.

2. Feedback

After everyone has practiced asking questions and taking notes or recording, ask everyone to write their responses to the following questions:

- What was comfortable for you about the interview?
- What was uncomfortable for you about the interview?
- What kinds of answers did you get to your questions (long, short, yes/no)?

- What was special about the interview?
- What would you change or do differently if you did the interview again?

Spend about half the period on the writing. Then ask the teams to get together again, read each other what they wrote about the interview, and discuss their responses.

3. Interviewing

When each team has practiced and is ready to interview their subject, go over the sheet of Steps to Follow for Conducting an Oral History Interview.

After each team has been on one interview, ask students about their experiences. Some focus questions:

- What most interested you about the life of the woman you interviewed?
- Did you find out anything about the woman you interviewed that surprised you? If so, why were you surprised?
- What did you learn about yourself by doing the interview?

4. Homework

A. Ask students to think about what kind of document they want to put together from their interviews. This written version will be due at the end of the Oral History Interviewing unit. Some alternative ways of creating a written document of the interview are:

- Verbatim transcribing of sections of the tape, if recorded, including interviewer questions and interviewee responses;
- Paraphrasing of the interview, either in the words of the interviewer (student describing life of narrator) or in the words of the narrator (student writing as if s/he were the narrator);
- Integrating words of the person interviewed with student's own knowledge and memories of her.

Extra credit could be given students who wished to expand their original report by doing further interviews, adding photographs, including a timeline of the national events that occurred during the woman's life, etc. This expanded report could be due at the end of the semester.

B. Schedule a time for each student to report on his/her oral history interview in class--in about a week's time.

Some alternative ways of reporting are:

- Playing part of the taped interview, preceded by a short description of the woman and her relationship to the student;
- Reading part or all of a verbatim transcript or description of the woman's life;
- Describing the most important points the student found out from the interview;
- Combining a description of the interview with photographs of the woman interviewed, or other displays that would give information about her.

Analyzing an Oral History Interview

In this section, students will:

(1) identify decision points in the lives of women they read about, and in the lives of the women they interviewed;

(2) identify the influences--personal, cultural, historical--on those women's decisions;

(3) distinguish between external (e.g., friends, national events) and internal (e.g., her own wishes) influences on the women's decisions, and

(4) identify any unforeseen obstacles and/or opportunities that influenced these women's lives.

This section can be done during the time students are completing their interviews outside of school.

1. Homework

Assign one or more oral histories to be read, or read one aloud in class. Suggested oral history selections are annotated at the end of this unit (pp.681-684). We suggest assigning different selections to every four or five students so the readings can be compared.

2. Discussion

A. Have students break into small groups according to what reading they did (if you assigned the same reading to everyone, divide them randomly). Appoint a recorder in each group who will turn in the lists from the group discussions. Ask each group to list the decisions or major events in the life of the woman they read about. When they have listed those, then have them decide whether the decision was influenced by cultural belief, by historical events or by personal choice, and enter this information on the list.

Ask each group to give you their list, which you can use to judge their ability to analyze oral histories in this way.

B. In class or for homework, have students analyze their readings again by listing the unforeseen obstacles and/or opportunities the woman encountered in her life, and think about how these events changed her life. Ask them how much control--if any--the woman had or could have had over the event. (There are always times when a person has no control; for example, over an illness, an accident, an inheritance, etc.)

C. Have the interviewing teams pair up again, and ask them to discuss the same questions from A. and B. above (decisions, influences on decisions, and unforeseen events) for the women they interviewed. Ask them to consider how much control the women they interviewed seemed to have over their lives: were the main events in their lives influenced by personal choice, by other people, by social or cultural expectations? Ask students to also consider whether the women conformed to or contradicted the prevailing stereotypes of what women were supposed to be like in that culture.

Note: It is crucial that there be no value judgment attached to the fact that women often have not exercised control over their lives or seen the alternatives open to them. This often happens because of the way females are socialized. The unit on Cultural Comparisons should have given students a perspective from which to see the reasons for the lack of choice or control many women experience.

D. Lead a discussion around the following question: Could the women that you read about and interviewed have exercised more control over their lives despite the force of cultural and historical circumstances? There is no single answer to this question, and it is all too easy to judge others in retrospect. However, it is hoped that through such discussions students will come to see both that there is probably more latitude for independent decision-making than they had realized, and that cultural and historical elements and unforeseen events could or do affect them more than they are likely to have taken into account.

Reporting on Oral History Interviews

In this section, students will:

> *see that there is strength and a diversity of experience in women in their communities.*

The students who have participated in the Oral History Interviewing unit have enjoyed making reports of their interviews and hearing their classmates' reports. Sometimes the women who were interviewed came to class later in the semester to talk more about their lives, or to let students interview them as a group.

1. As students listen to each other's reports, ask them to think about similarities and differences between the women they interviewed and those being described.

2. At the end of each class period, ask students to write down one similarity and one difference between the woman they interviewed and each one reported on.

Three interviews are printed on the following pages.

"Mrs. Y" is the report of a student in one of the field test classes. We are including it as an example of an oral history report.

The interviews with Guadelupe and Margaret were done by a project staff member, and have been transcribed from audiotapes.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW:

MRS. Y

Interview by Joan Liu

The following is a narration from a Chinese lady who came to the States as an immigrant two years ago. Her own name is Shuet-Yuk which means Snow Jade. She married a man called Y in 1943. She is now living with her husband in the Bay Area.

In many ways, Snow Jade's life has been quite different from other Chinese women that we have studied.

This is what she told me:

> I was born in 1920 in Hok Shan, a place in the province of Kwangtung in China. I was the third child of the family. My father was a merchant and my family was very rich. My father had three wives, and my mother was his second one. The first wife died after the births of her two daughters. My mother was at first one of the maids of the family. After the death of the first wife, my father took my mother, and married her. He married another woman four years after he had my mother. My mother said that he did not marry again because he had got tired of her, but he just wanted to have more children.
>
> My father died twelve years ago and my mother is still living in our home town. I go back several times every year during some festivals.
>
> I have fourteen brothers and sisters altogether. When we were at home, my father loved me and one of my brothers the most. It was different from many other families then. My mother told me that it was very seldom that the father would love his daughter so much. There was a reason for it. When I was born, there was no son in the family yet. I was the third daughter. My parents treated me like a boy, because I was like a boy. They put boys' clothes on me, and cut my hair short. Many other people really thought I was a boy.
>
> My father didn't like my two elder sisters as much because he said that they had weak characters. They were like the other girls at that time; they always stayed home and talked very little, but not me. Anyway, my parents treated all of us very well and were very fair. There was no difference between the boys and the girls. We were all sent to school. I started school at eight. I went to a school in Hok Shan to learn some general subjects like Chinese Language, Literature, Calligraphy and Arithmetic. Most of the Literatures were handed down from Confucius. We were taught how to lead a perfect and holy life from Confucius. I learned about the three obediences and the four virtues. I did obey my father,

but in a way, I did not follow all of these obediences and virtues things. I'll tell you in a moment.

It's because my father had business in Hong Kong, Canton, and Kong Mun (a place at the mouth of the Pearl River); he went back and forth around these cities.

When I was thirteen, I went to a school in Hong Kong for a year and went back to Canton. I went to another school in Canton for another two or three years.

Then the war started. I was seventeen then. It was very dangerous to stay at home during wartime; especially for young girls like me then. So I went to North Kwangtung with five of my younger brothers and sisters. My parents and the rest of the family stayed. I went to North Kwangtung and joined a guerilla camp there. I was a nurse. I stayed in the camp looking after wounded guerilla members and the children for about two and a half years.

I met my husband in the camp when I was nineteen. He was twenty-one at that time. He was a guerilla doctor. So, we worked together hand in hand. I stayed on duty until my brothers and sisters went home from the camp in 1940. Then, my husband and I joined the army, the Kuomintang; we were not yet married then.

In 1942, we switched from Kuomintang to the Communist Army, and continued to work as doctor and nurse together. Both of us were regarded as radical youth. We were very much influenced by the Communists' new ideas. We didn't believe in Confucius and the Kuomintang anymore. The new ideas from Mao were much more reasonable, exciting and advanced to us. We got married in 1943. There was no formal ceremony at all; we just invited several close friends and held a tea-party in the Army. I wrote to my family about the marriage, and they were very pleased. They had never met my husband before, but I knew they had confidence in me.

My first two twin daughters were born in 1944, but one of them died of smallpox when she was two. My husband and I stayed in the Army until the war ended in 1945.

After the war, we went to Canton and I started teaching in an elementary school. I stayed there for seven years, that is, from '45 to '52. My husband left Canton for Hong Kong in '46, but he came home almost once every month. Things were very fine then.

We moved to Hong Kong in '53. We had two sons and two daughters then, and I was having the third son. Now, I have seven children, and the youngest is almost twenty already.

I thought I loved my husband, but then I found out that it was not true. We got married because both of us were under the same situation, working together, and were sharing the same goal in defeating the Kuomintang. It sounds like there was nothing wrong, and the marriage should have been perfect. But, not until we had married, then we discovered that we had very different characters. He was too idealistic and I was very practical. You may ask why I didn't leave him. It's because of our children. If it was not for the kids, I would have gone a long time ago. I had to bring them all up. I didn't want my children to be either motherless or fatherless. I lived with my husband for the sake of the seven kids. Now, they are all grown, but I'm old. I don't have to put up with him very much longer, so that's alright. I won't be any much better if I leave him and be on my own now.

Analysis

Mrs. Y's experiences are quite different from many other women's in China that we have been studying. Unlike the other women, she got the chance to be educated at an early age. We can see that she has a very strong character. It was her own decision to bring with her the five younger brothers and sisters to North Kwangtung during the war; she was only seventeen then. Her two elder sisters didn't do that, but she did. She should have been a very charming child; if not, her father would not have loved her so much. It was very rare for a father to love a daughter better than all the other sons in China during those days in the 20's.

She didn't bind her feet. She married out of her own choice. Her parents did not have any influence on the marriage; they did not stop her from leaving home with her brothers and sisters. So, she got all the freedom she had wanted.

In an American society, it is very often that when a woman finds out that her husband is not satisfactory, she will divorce and leave him, whether or not she has any children. She will think about herself prior to anybody else. Of course, there are exceptions, but the above is the general case.

While in Mrs. Y's case, as she told me, she had already come to hate her husband. But, she is still living with him for the sake of the kids. From this, we can see the influence of the traditional obedience. Although Mrs. Y does not "obey" her husband nor her sons, she sacrifices for them.

Now she is growing old and her thoughts start to get out-of-date. She wants to have all her children around her. She wants her daughters to marry early. Many of her sons and daughters are in college or universities. But she wants them all to marry. She says that she hopes to see her grandchildren soon.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW*

GUADELUPE

Interview by Margaret Camarena

Guadelupe: I was born in Sacramento, California in 1933. I was the third child of a family of three children, the last of three, I should say. My parents were both from Mexico. My father came here as a very young man from Mexico and my mother came here as a baby; and her parents were fleeing the Revolution at that time and that's what, the factor, that brought them here to the United States. My father was about 13 years older than my mother so he was a young man of 17 when he came to the United States. They met here. They had the usual background of working in the railroads, working in the agriculture and, finally, their parents--my mother's parents--ended up in Sacramento where she got her formal schooling. And then she met my father and at the age of 16, she married. They, my parents, settled down in a little suburb of Sacramento called Fruitridge and, at that time, it was nothing but agricultural land around there, just a very small little community school, one store, one gas station.

The significant point of being born in that area that I remember and going to that little country school was that we were the only Mexican family there. And there was one other Black family. The rest was all Anglo people. I never recall any incidents of total exclusion or being excluded or segregated from the community. The point that does stand out in my mind was that they were always focusing--if there were any racial problems they were always focusing--on the Black family. And one night they did, whoever, bombed, threw a bomb in their front yard, a home-made bomb but it was an explosion. And, of course, the news ran through the community and I remember I was about seven years old. I do remember that it was my first awareness of being singled out for differences of color and race. And I do remember one of my first feelings was that I was really glad I was a shade lighter than that Black family. But from then on, I did hold that fear that something was different and hopefully that something like that never happen to our family, but it never did.

I had an older brother, an older sister, and I remember always feeling different. Oh gosh, I had problems with that because the other little girls would laugh at me, they would make fun of me, because the women would say, especially my grandmother would say, "What's wrong with you? You're not...you don't act like a young lady should." That was always thrown at me, "You don't act like a little girl should, like a young woman. You don't want to learn. What's to become of you?" And so, of course, I always kept feeling different and, just--something was wrong with me. On one hand, they would cater to me and pamper me. Then, on the other, when it came to the behaviors of what they really expected me to act, to bow, to lower my head and not talk back and so on, I would do....

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*An audiotape of this interview accompanies Sources of Strength.

Then they would spank me or I would get punished because I was not doing what they expected. So that was very confusing to me (laughing).

We, as girls, were expected to learn all these behaviors and skills in order to get married. That was definitely clear in our family that we were all going to get married. School was not important because we were going to get married and we would be mothers someday. What reinforced that was the church. I always felt that I did not have any control first of all because that was very, very, very dominant in my socialization--that a man was literally your owner, your boss, and it was all throughout my growing up years. The women--oh god, just thinking back now on every time they said something, it was always how to please him, how you don't answer back. One woman, I remember it was an in-law, she told me: "When you feel angry at your husband, and you feel you have to say something to him, go get a glass of water and always swallow, just keep swallowing that water and if you feel that you're going to tell him something that you're not supposed to, just always get a glass of water and drink water" (laughing).

But this is an example of the things that I heard constantly through my life and it went outside of the family too. It went into society: if you're dealing with a banker or dealing with a mechanic or whoever, as long as he was male, teacher, whatever, I mean they had total control.

When I was about eight years old, my parents, they announced to us that they were going to get a divorce. And up to that point, I had never really thought about leaving a comfortable home. We were, incidentally, we were very middle class. We owned our own home, we had our own car, my father worked all through the depression and my mother was a housewife and you could say that we always had the average comforts. After they were divorced, my mother had to leave the home. Again, I was too young to understand the legal ramifications and the why's and why-not's. But I do know that we left with my mother and we left to the inner city. She rented a home there and that was a shock, a cultural shock, both because she isolated herself from her family and our extended family, and also our community. 'Cause for some reasons, all through her life, she never wanted to live in the barrio or in the neighborhoods where there were Mexican people or even Black people. She always made sure we lived in a white neighborhood. Which, I do remember, was...isolated us more in the sense that we never had anybody else to identify with, the same race.

A significant point in my life when I was living there, in the inner city, was when the Second World War started. And we happened to attend a school where there was a large, large concentration of Japanese children. At that time, I was in about the third or fourth, no maybe fourth or fifth grade, and I do remember the rumors going through school. You know how children tell one another;

you hear so many different things. But one day we were playing with the Japanese children and the next day they were gone. And we heard that they were going to be taken to prisons and I remember looking up in the schoolyard and seeing some planes going overhead and again this feeling of just total doom--that something was wrong. And, at that point, I was so young, I still couldn't understand but I...just the fear of seeing these children and their families taken was really quite a shock.

My mother remarried shortly and, thereafter, she had four more children. We stayed there in the inner city until I was about 13. And then we moved back again to the suburbs. At that time, we used to call them farms. We went back to the same general area where I was born. And she bought a home there, she and my stepfather. Things were pretty, well, they weren't so good I would say, 'cause he was an alcoholic. Thereafter our life was quite unsettled and there was a lot of, well, upsetting situations for all of us. Right at that time, our house burned down and that was a turning point in our life again. It caused a divorce again, it caused us to go back and live with some relatives again in the inner city. For the next couple of years we really suffered, going from relatives to relatives and not really being received very warmly, I remember. I know now, looking back, one of the reasons was because our mother was a very proud woman. She had a lot of pride and also a lot of hurt. She was ostracized because of her first divorce and then her second divorce, and so that was one of the reasons why she wasn't well received. I always did feel sort of on the periphery of this extended family and we came from a very large extended family.

So shortly after that, we finally settled in a rented house, back in the same area again. It seemed we always were drawn there. And by this time, she started a pattern of her life which she ended that way. She died with the same pattern; she never changed her pattern. And that was, she constantly kept getting married--every two to three years. But, one of the things that changed my life was when my mother was in the throes of another marriage and this stepfather was, for whatever reasons, he was making overtures to me, sexual overtures to me, and I got very frightened and I was already about 14. I knew I could not go to my mother, I mean that was established that I could not go to my mother for consultation or just, just help. I knew that, it was already established, that I could not do that. Nothing. I was not listened to, anyway. So, I realized also, 'cause of the situation that I was in, that it was a very dangerous one and so I decided that I was going to get married. That was going to be my salvation and that marriage was going to serve many purposes. One is that I was going to choose the man who would have me, that's what I'll say. And the second thing was that I would get my freedom, so I thought. The third purpose was that I would leave my home the decent woman that I had been told all my life, in our culture, that that's how a good woman leaves--married--from her home, that's the only way a woman leaves. And so, I felt that I would be serving all those purposes.

So, within a year, I was married. I got married. Within six months of that marriage, I was separated from my husband and I was pregnant. The thing that I realize most in that marriage was that I would not accept things that were not comfortable to me, or happy or reasonable. And I had more spunk than I thought. So that was one of the main reasons why I left the marriage. He, the man, he was a very good man, but he was very, very, very traditional and we went to live with his mother and, in our culture, the mother-in-law is really, literally, your boss also. She tells you what to do and you do it. The total respect and submissiveness is given to her. That is the reason why I had to leave 'cause I would not do that. She was a single woman at that time, a widow. And she told me, she sat me down and told me, "This is what I'm going to do for my son, this is what you'll do," (which) literally was nothing. She was going to cook for him, clean for him and so on. And I just said, "Oh no, I'm his wife. I'm not going to do that." She asserted her control and he went along with whatever she said. And that's the way it was supposed to be, right? I couldn't go to town, I couldn't do any shopping or anything without her with me. And, ah, so it was like a continuation of being in a prison: one situation was like being in a prison with my mother and her husband and it was just like I exchanged another one. To me, it was no different. And then, my mother had divorced at that time, again. So it was sort of safe to go back home.

I had my child at home. He, he went to the service. We never got a divorce; he went to the service. And we still had strong feelings, of course. But we were so young, so immature and just could never...and at that point in time, neither he nor I and a lot of young people I'm sure just didn't have.... Communication just wasn't heard of...what was that word--communicate. Learn the skills of communication. I mean it just wasn't heard. We had nobody to talk to; we couldn't go to our parents. So all we had was ourselves with raw feelings and immaturity really. No experience whatsoever, so we just used to literally tear ourselves apart. But he finally left and, like I said, I didn't divorce him but we never lived together. We saw a lot of each other but we didn't live together again.

While he was away, I did meet another male, another man, who was very meaningful to me. He was also in the service and he was from New York. And sure enough, I got pregnant with my second child. Well, I certainly was in a dilemma there because I was writing to my husband and we had plans that as soon as he was finished with his stay in the service that he'd come out and we'd finally live together and alone and so on. But it just so happened that the baby was due around the time he was to come home. Which is really very sad. It seems then that, at that time, I didn't have any...much control over my life at that time, the way things were going. So just it happened. Well, he did come home and, of course, he found out. And then he filed for a divorce. And he filed for divorce and then he also filed for custody of our child, my first-born. And he claimed, he was claiming, that I was an unfit mother.

We went to court once and we were going to have some other hearings and for some reason, I really don't recall, it lingered about a year. And then, finally, we were to go for the last hearing. Maybe it was set about two-months' time, and we had already been to about, like I say, three hearings, and things did not look good for me. And my lawyer told me, he said, "Well, you better brace yourself," he says, "I have a feeling that things are not going to go your way." So I was really frightened. And during that, right after that, I had many thoughts--many, many thoughts. One of them was to leave the country, to go to Mexico with some relatives that I had in Guadalajara. Because I was determined that nobody was going to take my child from me, that I did know. When I did make decisions, no matter how old I was, I always kept them. That's one thing, I had that strength, which I didn't recognize until years later.

One day, my mother approached me and said that she could find a solution to my problem. Her solution was that one of the nephews of her husband was willing to marry me. That would prove I was a good woman, being married. So I thought about it; she used to easily influence me anyway. Well, it's your mother. So, I consented to that. And so we got married and when I went for the hearing, my lawyer presented Mrs. Hernandes and it was like magic. The judge said that was it; I was legal and I was a married woman and I had a husband and there was no reason for them to take my child away from me. So that was another turning point in my life (laughing).

At that time, I was working for the state of California and I was nothing but a typist/clerk and the salary, I do remember, my total pay for the month, clear, was about $200. We were just barely eating and living, the children and I, and I won't deny that that did influence me, plus the emotional feelings that a man was going to take care of me, and that's how I remember feeling--very overwhelmed that he was really going to take care of me totally. So I agreed and we began living with each other.

The result of the next four and a half years was four more children and--we never had a violent marriage but it was not happy for me. I could not forget why we got married and how we got married. I grew close to him but, again, he was very traditional. Somehow, all through these four and a half years, I could never lose the feeling that I was trapped, that I was literally trapped. I would pose to him quest.... Well, I would ask him, like, if I could go to a night class. I would ask if I could form a sewing circle during the day with other women friends. Those were the reasons we used to have terrible, terrible fights because he would always tell me, "Why do you always want to do these things? Look at the other women. They're not asking their husbands to do these things. Why do you want to do these things?" And I'd look at him and I think my answer was, at that time, "I don't know. It's just a feeling." And it was; I didn't know why. I could label now, I could identify. I could even put theories on some of my feelings and thoughts but, at that time, it was solely just these feelings that I had to do something. And now I know that I had to enrich myself and, I guess, literally tap my potentials, whatever they were. So that was our dissention always. And the more I was denied this, the more I asked. The more I was denied, the more important it got to me. Really it seemed the trap. It seemed again here I was in this trap.

Finally, he had to leave to Mexico to see his mother, who was very ill. He stayed a month. And when he came back, the rumors were that he had had a love affair over there, and I had never experienced that before. But when I heard about it and it was confirmed, it really shattered me. But I thought it out and I said, "Okay, I'm going to try to forget this." I tried it for about a month or two. Obviously, I would not or could not accept it. I wouldn't even accept him. So we finally separated. But I knew that as long as I stayed in Sacramento, we would continue seeing each other. I knew that much, that I would never say no to him.

So, I decided, I plotted and I planned it right. I decided to move with the children to San Jose. And I decided not to tell him. I decided just to leave. And that's what I did. He went to work one morning and I had some truckers...well, I had two cousins help me with two trucks. I loaded the furniture and I left with the children. And I came here to San Jose. That was in 1960.

During this time, though, I really was very bitter--very, very bitter. I felt that life had dealt me some hard blows. And I had tried to be a good woman, I had tried. I had done what I felt I had been told and what I had seen that women do to have good marriages. Or at least be married and have someone taking care of you. And I just felt that I had been betrayed by life, by everything. So I was quite bitter--very, very bitter, in fact.

But I was still, oh, I was very restless when I first arrived here. So what I'd do was pack the kids in the car and I would take off to San Diego. I was always doing things like that. We stayed there nine months and it was a beautiful time of our life. That was beautiful. But then, my mother and my brothers and sisters would call. They would come and visit, literally, all that way. They came at least five times. They would continually pound on me and pound on me that what I was doing over here alone with the children? What if they got sick, and on and on. They'd send letters, they'd call me. Something happened, that I did get a little fear. I don't know what it was; I really can't recall what made me feel some fear and finally believe them. So I decided to come back to San Jose and once I got back.... It's strange, I really don't know why, but it's like I dug in with my emotions and physically. I totally, totally isolated myself from, I guess, the world. And what I did--just totally put all my energies, thoughts and emotions on the children. I didn't go out, I didn't seek outside interests, hobbies, nothing. The car would be parked, I'm not exaggerating, in front of the house for 10 days and I wouldn't go anywhere.

Something happened during those years. I spent about five years like that. Once, I did attempt a relationship and that just turned sour and again, that was just a reinforcement of all the hurts I felt. But something really happened to me; it's like I really lost my self-confidence. I lost any self-esteem. I had gained weight. I looked like a 50-year-old matronly woman.

Well, about a year later, my oldest daughter, who was 17 at the time, came to me and said to me that she was going to graduate next year, that June, and that she was going to go to college. And she was going to move out. And I said "fine"--I was putting up this brave front, you know, never sharing, at that time not having the skills to share feelings and thoughts with your children, or anyone for that matter.

So they left for school the next day. I remember, I was sitting at the kitchen table and I just started to cry and cry and cry. What ran through my mind and my feelings was that I felt that she was leaving me, and abandoning me. But, it was not only her; I saw all six of them, just totally leaving me. The more I thought about it, the more hysterical I got, but then I tried to bolster some strength up and say, "Well, that's okay. They can leave. I can get married again." It was like, when I remembered that, I just hysterically started crying again and said, "My god, I don't want to." That, that, just that experience as I remember it made me continue being so upset. And then I thought, "Well, I can go to work." But I had been so out of touch, out of work. Then I thought to myself, "Well, what can I do?" And all I knew how to do was just clerical-type work and I wasn't really happy with that type of work; I'd been doing it so long. And I was really very hysterical; I just couldn't stop crying. So I picked up the phone book, looked up mental health, picked up the phone and I called. They made an appointment for me the next morning. That was a turning point in my life.

I went in and there was Mr. S., who was my interviewer, and the psychiatric social worker. Well, from that day, my life really started just turning. He formed a group (he was also an experimenter, an innovator) and he formed a group that met every day for an hour. And he picked a core group and I attended, I remember, I wouldn't miss. I could really count the times that I missed in the whole...it was 12, no 13 months. From that point on, I really worked on myself, really finding out about myself and he encouraged us. A lot of the other women were in similar circumstances as I, divorced with children and really just going batty. No skills, no self-esteem, and oh, god!

He's the one who started encouraging me to think about school again. So I finally decided to try school and that's when I decided to go into college. But I do remember he was my first "significant other." A person who really, really cared, second, that he was a male. That was very important. But that he really cared, because up to that point, I had never felt that. I'm sure there were people who really cared but I could not feel it nor could I let them care for me.

But the insight and turning point in my life was when I finally had to take--and understand--that I had to take responsibility for what happens to me. What really happens to me. And that's a very lonely place to be because you leave go. I remember, I described to him that it was like having operations where you're cutting away part of your culture, part of your socialization, that were very comfortable and very good to me. And yet, trying new things that weren't identified, but they were there. And I remember that that was a period when I used to get very depressed and cry a lot because it was very...I didn't want to. I didn't want to let go 'cause it was so part of me. But yet I knew the results so far had not been that good. But it was like not knowing, well, what do I replace it with? That was what was scary. What can I say after that?

Once I just got going, it was like unleashing, I don't know, tons and tons of fireworks because after that, from there on in, things always came my way. Once I made the decision that I was going to get a Master's, that was it. I just had to do the things to work around that. I was a full-time day student all those six years and I finished in six years with the children. I used to work summers sometimes. But I said I was not going to work, I was not going to stop until I had that Master's in my hand and that's what I did.

When I graduated from Berkeley in 1974, in June, my children gave me a big, big reception. They rented a hall, they had an orchestra, they had food catered, they had mariachies. They sent off formal invitations. To me, that was a highlight. I mean it was just so beautiful. And that kind of describes my children. I mean my children have never, and I know this sounds, but anybody who knows me knows this is true, not one of my children has ever given me problems about truancy, shoplifting, smoking; they don't smoke, they don't drink. They've married, the girls have married men that do the same thing. They adhere to the same life style. They work, they're going to school, college, that's all I can say. God has blessed me, and I always say that but I'll take credit for it, too. I worked hard!

My last year in Berkeley, that summer, I finally decided that I was going to get off of welfare. It was the year where they had this 19-page requirement at the welfare and social services. I remember receiving that form and I looked at it, 19 pages both sides of questions, and I read it and I tore it up. I said I refuse to belong to somebody else. I'm going to finally take control of my life in the financial area. And I remember talking this over with a woman friend of mine and I was sharing with her some of the feelings. And some of the feelings that I had was that I was really totally afraid to let go. How would I support myself? What would I do without that support? I didn't know any other way. And then I would flip to the other side and say, "My god, here I am, almost a graduate student, with these vast experiences and strengths and I recognize them and I know I have them and I, I know I can do it." Yet, on the other side, here I am saying, "I can't." And I thought, "My god, if I am here, this person who has had these opportunities to know my strengths, know I can do it, and the skills now...and if I feel this way, what happens to all those women who have not had this exposure?"

So that last year I worked as a social services coordinator. By the time I graduated, which was June of '74, the Director...had accepted and just got appointed a Dean of innovations at our new college, our other college. So the position became available and she wanted me to take that position. And of course I was very afraid. I was afraid. Deathly afraid 'cause it was a totally administrative position. I had never worked a day, a professional day in my life. I'd been an intern but I didn't put too much validity to that. So finally, I just made a decision again. I just said, "I'm gonna do it. I know I can do it." Part of me would say "You don't know how, but you know you can," 'cause I had already had these experiences of literally taking the bull by the horn, making the decision and then finding out how I can expedite whatever.... So I did. One week I graduated, and the next week I already was an administrator of a program with a budget and so on. It was beautiful. I mean, what can I say?

I just learned that the main factor that keeps women from these non-traditional careers is the fear. It's really the fear. But I learned also that once you're in there, there's nothing to fear. There's nothing to fear but just.... Males go into these traditional careers and they have to learn and get trained to do whatever the tasks are required. And that's what I had to do. There are so many people, you don't learn it just by sitting there. What happens is that there's people in every department that know what you need to know and you, again, just seek that information. And it all ties in.

You're catching me at a very turning point in my life. And it feels very nice. It just feels, in fact, it feels very weepy even. About a year and a half ago...I had been a single parent for seventeen years. I have never remarried; I have never lived with a man. And a year and a half ago--due to factors such as my baby being 17 this year, and the others are older, of course--I made a decision a year and a half ago that I was ready to share my life with a male, and I want this. Prior to that, it was nice fantasies, a nice wish to think that, but I knew that I did not want to do that.

One of the factors that made me decide this was that I did have my children's permission now to look into this last, I feel, aspect of my life. It's probably not the last one. But at this point in time, it feels like it's my last one. So about a year ago--I have met a certain male--and it's been a year now I've had this relationship. It's gotten to the point now where we're talking about living together. Or possibly marriage. I am not afraid anymore. I'm not afraid of taking that risk. I know nothing can happen but good things. Another insight to this is that, there's another part of me that is very strong and very happy with my work, it's just very important. My other friends, my other social outlets, my other educational growth experiences. That's just as important and I love it. And yet, I love that other part of me that is very soft, very scared, and very vulnerable and in love. And things may happen, fine, and they may not and it's okay. And I can take a "no" and I can take a "yes." And I may not like it, but it's okay.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW*

MARGARET

Interview by Margaret Camarena

Margaret: My father had just recently gotten out of the Veterans Hospital from wounds from World War I and my mother was a nurse, an army nurse in the Veterans Hospital. That's how they met. And he had not been out of the hospital too long, I think, probably, when they were married. And then he worked as a stone mason, which was the trade that he had started to learn in Scotland when he was a kid.

I know some people can remember things way, way back. I have not that kind of memory. However, my earliest memory is not a happy one. Really, for the most part, I don't have very many happy memories until I was, well, by the time I was 10 years old. We had moved to a different place and then I started developing my own friends and out of my own peers I gained happiness. My father was a drunkard, and now we call them alcoholics. He always refused to admit that he had a problem. It was always something that he could control, but he drank a great deal and it made our family a miserable situation. That miserable early recollection I have is of a Christmas Eve, and he came in and wrecked all of our toys and all that kind of lousy crap.

In terms of who influenced me in my life I really have a hard time saying anything other than I just feel as if I did it myself. I guess because my mother was an R.N. I had an inclination to go into medicine. I think the thing of kids trying to somehow garner their parents' love is probably that which drove me to want to get a college degree and be a doctor and do really great things, so that somehow I could get the feeling that my parents really loved me. If I could achieve enough, maybe they would like me. I suppose in a way that's unfair to them. As I've looked back over the years (and there've been a lot of them to look back over), I really do recognize that I strove too much to try to somehow get the feeling that they accepted me and loved me. I do not feel that I was loved. Maybe I was, but somehow they didn't telegraph it to me. So I think I was probably trying to over-achieve so that they would be proud that they had me, that I wouldn't have been an inconvenience. But I think I must have felt that... I never had the feeling that they didn't want me, but nevertheless I had the feeling that it could have been a lot better for them if they hadn't had my brother and I. Chances are they would have split up if they hadn't had us, for one thing, because they were very unhappily married. In those days you just didn't divorce, and even more so if you had children. You always, "Oh, think of the children." I'm sure that's what's kept very many people together, thinking of the children. And as I see, it's a rather obtuse way of looking at it, because children certainly can't be benefited living in a warring environment all the time, a contentious, unhappy warring environment. I can't believe that's good for kids. I don't think separation is either, as far as that goes, but it's one of those things that it's hard to come up with the right answer, or what is best tc do. But I think probably my parents influenced me because I wanted to please them so badly. So it's a strange type of influence, but nevertheless it's influence. I think that is what influenced me to strive as hard as I did and have throughout my life to get an education.

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*An audiotape of this interview accompanies Sources of Strength.

What I'm going to recount is I was already in high school and I was talking about this whole idea of going on to college. I remember when I said something about it, my father said, "Who the hell does she think she is? Mary, Queen of Scots?" Of course, in later years, after I read a little more about Scottish history, I thought, "Jesus, the guy didn't even know his own history, or he would never have said Mary, Queen of Scots" (laughs). So it was kind of... I'm sure it's very hard on parents to know that their kids would like to do something that they can't. I think that's difficult.

I worked all the time I was in high school, so that I had money to go to high school. Even though it was public education, you still have to have some money, if you're going to school.

Then I went on to junior college for a couple of years, which is when the Mary, Queen of Scots story came out--when I was going to go to junior college. My aspirations were to be a doctor. I wanted to be an MD. I was pretty good in science courses. I really didn't have what it took, probably, to go all the way in terms of grades. I wasn't an outstanding student. I was too bound up in other things to really be a good student. One of the things I've said a number of times as I've been older is that if somebody wanted to give me something really neat, they would make it possible for me to just be a student. I think that would be great. But my aspiration was to be a doctor, and it was a very unrealistic goal. My dad just felt that I should get a job, and I can understand why. He just felt that a person is supposed to get a job, that it was unrealistic for me to go on to college at all.

Interviewer: When you were going through high school, you mentioned having some close friends. Did you establish any close relationships with young men?

Margaret: Oh yes, Harry. My first husband. We...that's a childhood romance. We started going together in 7th grade, in junior high school. There was one time where his mother... His mother was a bitch. She was the most evil women I've ever known, literally. Even after all of these years. And I could recite things that happened to others at her hand, not just to me. But, Harry and I fell in love in seventh grade and we both went to the same church youth group. And there was a time where his mother withheld his allowance if he took me out and gave him double allowance if he would take Eloise out instead. But that was neat. So I formed a very firm attachment, and all the way through high school except for that one period where she broke us up because she didn't think I was good enough for him. My parents were so poor that I wasn't a very good... His father worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad; he had a very good job. They were people who weren't touched by the Depression, and they were moderately well-to-do. Nobody that I knew then was wealthy, but they were moderately well-to-do, and of course I represented a lower socioeconomic strata. Lower than they wanted for their son.

I never really entertained the idea that I wouldn't go to school. Whether it was because, as I see so many students today, because they couldn't think of anything better to do--I don't know whether that was it--or whether, I think, my motivation was quite strong to go into medicine. It was very strong. I really couldn't see myself as anything other than achieving something very worthwhile. And of course in my mind then that necessitated a college education. Now I see things differently. I understand the value, but I'm afraid I've become quite cynical about the value of a degree. But in those days I was very naive, all believing, and I just never entertained the idea of anything but going to college. And of course, going to a junior college made it quite possible. I just kept on working and the expenses were minimal and my parents let me live at home. No question ever came up of my having to pay room and board. I just stayed on as if I were still in high school. It was like a post-high-school. I went, I stayed on for two years at junior college, and then, of course, World War II broke and Harry had come up to Berkeley. He was very bright and he was an engineering major at Cal Berkeley. And Pearl Harbor had happened and so the military was breathing down every young man's neck. Oh--I did entertain another idea. I tried to get into the Marine Corps, the Women's Marine Corps, and I couldn't because I was an alien. I had never become an American citizen because the law changed in 1922 some time in such a way that I could not become an American citizen except on my own, not by virtue of my father's citizenship.

Interviewer: So when you finished junior college what happened?

Margaret: Well, I went to work. At that point I guess there was a certain finality. I kind of in a way knew that was it for education. Somewhere along the line... oh well, I'll tell you how it came about. I couldn't go on to graduate school because I was an alien. I mean, I couldn't go on to a four-year school for two reasons. One, I couldn't afford it. There was no way. In those days the expectation for girls was certainly not that they would go on to school but that they'd get a job or get married, something like that. So there were no funds to help someone of my meager circumstance to go to college, to go on to complete the four years. I had been a pre-med major in junior college. I had done all right. I wasn't a straight A student, but I had done all right. But girls just didn't go to medical school. They just didn't go on to get a pre-med major. There was one ray of hope for a while, and, boy, I remember I thought that was really going to pan out, and that was the possibility of going back to Canada and finishing my college education, my four years, and going to med school there at the Royal Victorian Hospital in Canada. But I was just 17 when I got out of high school, and just 17 then was a lot different story than 17 now. And my parents wouldn't even consider the thought that I could have gone to Canada and gone to school by myself. No way. I could have, I knew I could, but they didn't know I could. I could have done anything, but they didn't know that.

Interviewer: So what happened? You went to work?

Margaret: So I went to work and Harry and I got married. He had to quit at Berkeley six months short of his degree because he was going to be drafted. So rather than be drafted he joined the Air Force, to avoid being a ground soldier. So we got married earlier than we would have; we would have waited until he graduated, probably, and then gotten married. And we arrived at our honeymoon destination and the next morning got a telegram that he had to report, which was a story that was oft repeated during those days. I stayed by myself a little while but then it became economically feasible for me to move back with my parents. I stayed there until it was okay for me to go where he was, and then I went with him. Then I got pregnant. My daughter was born. She was 15 months old when he was killed, so she didn't remember him, but he did have the pleasure of knowing her. He was called in the Air Transport Command, which meant that he was in the ferry service and they ferried planes to where they were needed, whatever battleground they were needed. It was a neat assignment in that I got to see him a lot more. And he was on a flight from Dakar (French West Africa) down to Johannesburg in South Africa when something happened, and it was considered one of the unsolved mysteries of World War II.

Knowing Harry certainly shaped my life by getting... I got married and I had a child, which changed all that I could do. That altered, narrowed my choices down considerably, and after he was killed I could no longer entertain the idea of going to med school. So I decided, "I'll make it in a different way. I'll go into psychology. I'll become a psychiatrist." Except you couldn't become a psychiatrist then because you had to be an MD first. "I'll go into counseling." And so on. That's pretty much the way I took all my courses, with the idea that I was going into counseling somehow or another. I was always preparing to do something professionally.

Interviewer: How long did this period go on that you were working and taking care of your child?

Margaret: The whole time that I was a widow, that was close to five years. Gail was in kindergarten when I remarried. I just stayed on in that pattern of going to school from about 7:30 until 12:00 and then getting to my job working from 1 to 5 and then two nights a week driving to Occidental College to take a couple of courses there. That was the standard pattern for a couple of years anyway.

So I went and got the AA and applied to UCLA and was accepted in their Department of Psychology, which was what I had decided I would go into, and was accepted there. And I was to start there in the fall of 1949.

Interviewer: What happened that you didn't start?

Margaret: I met the man I then married, my second husband.

Interviewer: Can you describe how you met him?

Margaret: Yeah. I was standing on the corner waiting for my girlfriend to pick me up at work and he drove by.

Interviewer: How long had you known him before you got married?

Margaret: Not long enough. I should have known him a little longer. I'd have probably gone to UCLA if I had.

Interviewer: How did your life change after your marriage?

Margaret: I quit working and I quit going to school.

Interviewer: You just stayed home.

Margaret: Un huh. I got pregnant shortly thereafter. He was already 30 and I was 27, so if we wanted to have children, the time was right to do it. And so I got pregnant right away. During that time I realized that Jack was a rather intelligent person who was unrealized and needed the advantage of a college education. I convinced him to go back to school, even though we had a ready-made family with Gail. And then Murray was born within a year. But I finally convinced him that all was well, that I could work, and he could go to school. He had used up his GI bill on on-the-job training, so he didn't have any GI bill left, but I knew that I could work and so on. Then, you realize, this is (pre-pill) era, and nothing else was all that good either. I got pregnant again. I had finally convinced him to go back to school and so I didn't let him know I was pregnant. Had I let him know he would have decided not to go to school, so I pulled what was in a way not a totally honest ruse there. But he knew by the time he actually started school that we were going to have another child.

Interviewer: How were those years when you were working and he was going to school?

Margaret: They were great years. They were neat years. We had a common goal. Everybody was working toward it. It was a good experience. Living on the campus. That was the heyday of all the World War II vets going back to school. Lots of married students. Housing on the campus, which there is again now on campuses, but up until that time there had been no provision on any campus. When you got married that was the end of education for you. So we were part of that group that reestablished the idea, or established, actually, the idea, that you could go to school even though you were married. Everybody was in the same poverty-stricken boat.

Interviewer: After he finished school, what happened?

Margaret: He got a job teaching vocational agriculture at King City High School. And we were there for four years, and he was a successful teacher. I was a good cook. Gosh--canned everything and froze everything and made jam and baked pies. All the things that in a farming community that was the standard for farm women to do. I fit right in and did it. I pasteurized milk and I did all kinds of things. But I never had the feeling that I was ever able to please him. You see the parallel don't you? I never could get my father's love; I never had the feeling that my mother loved me. When we were first married I had to give up my friends, but I just thought, "Well, he's not interested in them. We should develop new friends. New marriage, new friends." I shouldn't have had to give up my friends. But having been a widow for quite a while and having seen a lot of marriages go on the rocks, those wartime marriages, I would have done anything rather than have my marriage go under. And because of that anything to keep a marriage intact, I fell into the pattern of subsuming my selfness. It took a long time to realize it, but when I did realize it, it was painful. And for a long time I felt I did have a successful marriage.

I think the point at which I all of the sudden came to realize that it wasn't that great for me, was at the point when my children were in school all day long. And somehow or another I had the idea that it was my turn to finish my education. I guess always I thought that was how it would be played. I thought that was the rules of the game. So I got information together to return to school and finish my degree, hopefully in psychology, and then on into counseling, only to find out that my husband did not share that as a goal. He said something that was extremely hurtful to me when I was very excited about seeing maybe in the fall I could go back to school. He just made the statement that, if I was going to go out of the house, it would be to go to work, not to go to school. That was the first time that I began to question, hey, what is this marriage all about? That was the inkling of how one-sided it was. Then, in retrospect, I went along at the time, but then more and more, that was the initial point at which I realized something wasn't quite fair to me. Then erosion took over. From there on out I became... I was then sensitized to the fact that everything wasn't quite the way I thought it was supposed to be, whatever "supposed" means. This is my construct about it. So I became increasingly aware of the fact that it was a one-sided arrangement, that in a way I was giving up too much of myself. So what I was getting out of it wasn't as good a bargain as I thought it was.

There was a period of time, when I was about 35 or so, when I despaired of there being anything very good for me in life. I really did, seriously, I gave a lot of thought to suicide. To "What the hell's the use?" Obviously I didn't give it the kind of serious thought that it takes to do it. But I certainly was screaming out in many ways for help.

Interviewer: What happened that moved you out of that despair?

Margaret: Well...I think probably my own intelligence. I know intelligent people do commit suicide, but...if I wasn't willing to live through that, why was I forcing my children to have to live through it? Here I was, too chicken to see it through, and yet I was leaving them to have to see it through. I knew damn good and well that I was a better parent than that. I knew that their hope for a life of wide horizons was really dependent upon me, not their father. I knew...that's what did it. I remember the night very well, but that's probably what did it. I just had to get far enough away to realize it--"Hey, this isn't you." I will not say it was a strong faith in god, although I was very active in the church and so on. It had really nothing to do with a faith in god. I think it had to do with a very tiny faith in myself.

Interviewer: What did you do after this time? Did you go back to work?

Margaret: Then we moved up here and the home, school club, church... I was very involved in the church. I taught. I became quite good at being a teacher in a church school, to the point where I became in the Presbytery (which is a larger unit) a teacher of teachers. I held training sessions to teach people how to use the curriculum and how to relate to students and how to be a teacher. And I was successful enough at that that I ended up doing it on the level of the northern California geographic area of the Presbyterian Church, where I was teaching people who came from all over the Bay Area and further--even northern California. My specialty was junior high school kids. I was quite successful at that. I began very seriously to not just be... well, see, if you're a good teacher you're going to have to do more work in your field. If your field happens to be religion, theology, if you're going to really be honest in what you teach junior high school kids or high school kids about theology, then you've got to really study it yourself in greater depth. That's exactly what I did. I really studied through the direction of the seminary in San Anselmo. I really dug into it.

It was a very big struggle in my life because I had been going around teaching the place of the church and the primacy of a religious experience. And boy, that was a big thing when I finally had to say, "Look, it's getting in the way of people having that very experience." A lot of people thought a lot of me. It was a big ego trip for me because that was one place where even without the credentials I was well respected. So that was a big step to take, to just say, that's it. That was a big step and I have never regretted that I took it, in spite of the fact that I have been involved deeply ever since I was 10 years of age--very deeply. I can't tell you how engrossed I was in the church and how engrossed the church was in me, to the point where there was almost no telling where one stopped and the other began. It was one place where I had being, where I was accepted. The people in the church thought I was great. Whereas I didn't get that feeling from my parents. I was doing a lot for nothing, too, so they should have thought I was great. And I was a lot and I was doing it on a professional basis. I organized an Adult Education Program that got written up in a national magazine. So I was doing a lot and it was good for me to know that I could do that. It was a great boost to my ego for me to know I could organize, think through, plan, have an idea, organize other people around this idea of mine, get the people together, write the material, get it on the road. It was a neat thing for me to know about myself--that I could pull something like that off. It was very successful. They even paid for it. If you know anything about the Protestant Church, people aren't going to pay for hardly anything but their tithe. But to actually pay to take a class? It was a very high-quality adult education program. It ran for about three years. Having done it was good for me. It was a good experience. The church was always good to me. That was another part of the problem. It had been that wherein I had gained anything at all. It was a big struggle to, loosely state, turn my back on the church. I didn't. I really faced it straight on and have ever since.

(Part 2)

We entered into family counseling. I'm really drawing blanks on those things, aren't I? It's really interesting. Virginia Satire, Conjoint Family Therapy. We entered into that. We had a novice counselor and I think it was a bad experience. It was a bad experience for me. In ensuing years I have learned from my children that they thought it was a really jerky thing to do. And my children are pretty...if they had felt there was anything positive...but they felt it really was jerky. It was not a good experience. If I had really been torn apart by it and then put back together I would call it a good experience. Knowing what I did about counseling techniques, I would have understood that ultimately it was good. But nothing happened good. It just seemed more of my saying, well, it must have been my doing this or my doing that. Well, the hell it was! But through it all I guess what I would have to say is in each of the sessions my husband would come out looking pure as the driven snow and it was only me who looked bad. Well, okay, if that was the game, fine, I should have felt that way. But somewhere along the line in counseling you then take it and put people back together again. I don't mean make them a happy marriage again. But in good therapy, as the counselor, you see that your client is really going through hell. You let them go ahead and go through that valley of death or whatever, but then you begin as the counselor; you try to play it back for them so they can come back like a phoenix coming out of the ashes to where they can stand themselves again.

Well, I was left in the depths. There was some damage done. I was damaged by it. Fortunately, let me put it this way, I can think of some people, who if they had had done to them what I had had done to me, without putting any of me back together, probably would have ended up in a booby hatch for a while. But I didn't. I went through an awful travail. But fortunately I was able somehow to see something--see the light at the end of the tunnel, as tiny as that light was. I felt like I came through it okay. I think the marriage was over then. I think that if anything was sacrificed at all through that, it was the marriage, because one of the things I found out was that no one was going to do anything for me. I was going to have to do it all for myself. That's what people should come out of therapy knowing anyway...that it is within you. But something more positive could have come had it been handled by a more able therapist or counselor. So I knew that I either had to lose my identity altogether...this is what the travail was.... Something had to give, either me as a person or other things, and the major other thing was the marriage. I think we lost our marriage there.

I never had any money. I think that's interesting. You say, well, do you really need money? You could have had a dress if you wanted, or this or that. Well, I could have had it if I was willing to buy it at Macy's or the Emporium where there were credit cards. Sometimes I just wanted to go into a shop and buy a skirt or pants or buy something. If we're going to talk about women's needs, women need to have some money to spend. In the old farm days, the women got the butter and egg money. The millions off of the wheat the man got to buy more equipment and pay the mortgage, and women get the butter and egg money. That was the old farm culture. Everybody needs an allowance. Why? Because our worth in our society is measured by having money to spend. A woman needs to have a little bit of money of her own. If her husband isn't sensitive to that need, or if her father isn't sensitive to that need, whoever it is, then she has to get it some other way. So you go to work. You know that one way to get money is to go to work. That's what I did. And I've been working ever since.

Theoretically, the agreement within the family--between my husband and I--was that the money I earned, my working, was not to elevate our standard of living. We weren't to buy a grander house and a fancier car and all that. The agreement was that my salary would buy vacation and education. My salary would be the education for the children and so that we could take vacations. It was something that I really wanted to do and that was to go to Scotland.

That was a major undertaking because I never do things halfway. I had decided I would buy a car in Europe and I had decided I wanted us all to go. I earned enough money for our whole family to go to Europe and pick up a car while we were over there to drive around. I'm really proud of that. I really am. My husband was opposed, thought I was crazy, let me know how stupid I was: "Who did I think

I was to ever buy a car?" If you remember our first meeting... does that ring like "Who the hell does she think she is, Mary, Queen of Scots?" Do you hear the sameness there? It was the most major undertaking of my life to pull off a coup like that. I know that both the boys were very impressed to get to go to Europe. It was a pretty wild idea that they would ever get to do it. And I know they really liked it. We did neat things. We saw the British Grand Prix that year and it was fascinating to go to a Grand Prix race. I just loved it. We slept on the side of the road, we camped in the European campgrounds. Woke up in the morning and found ourselves on a cliff above the Mediterranean. Just fabulous. You can see how neat it was. I felt very sad. Underlying it all was a feeling, because Jack would not share it with us. But I had already by then known that I could no longer wait my life out for him to agree to do things. I guess I came to the realization that this is my life. I just couldn't wait. Not too many months ago my husband was talking and I said, "I just want to ask you something. Do I figure in your retirement plans?" And he said, "No." So you see, that kind of tells me that I've got to keep track of my finances.

Interviewer: It sound like when he gets to the retirement he plans to go his separate way.

Margaret: Yes. Now, if I want to do that, I can go. But it's kind of a tag-along deal. I can go if that's what I want to. I can go along. That's not really a very neat arrangement. It didn't make me mad. I don't even think I felt hurt. I just added it up to knowing where I stood. It was interesting. I didn't get mad. I don't think I felt hurt. I've already known now for about seven years, it's been that long a time when I got the picture into focus. I really got the picture. It's amazing how much easier it is to handle after you get it into focus--the fact that I really didn't have a marriage and that I could...that I have had a lot of decisions to make, left up to me to make. I could have gotten myself separate quarters, and there have been two times when I almost did because the verbal abuse was more than I wanted to put up with. And I thought, "Let's look at this calmly. What really are you going to be gaining one way or the other?" So I've just become very analytical about keeping myself solvent. I don't think I'm bitter about it. It isn't what I thought I was getting into in terms of a marriage, but jese, you know, lots of things change. Our expectations play a lot of tricks on us in life. I don't think I'm resentful about it.

Interviewer: It seems now like you're the master of your own ship.

Margaret: Yes. It's really kind of a good feeling. At least I know I'm not at the mercy of the whim of some other. If I make a damn fool mistake, I've made it. I have to say, "Okay Margaret, you blew it." And I can no longer say, "Well, if I had been free to do..." because I really am now fairly free to do--not really totally, but fairly free. Well, interestingly enough, I have made the decision, actually made the decision, to the point where it doesn't bother me anymore that I am not going to get a degree. That is a decision I finally made on my own. An opportunity did come and I looked at all sides of it and I knew that the only thing more a degree could do for me than what I am already able to do without it is get me a bigger salary. As long as I'm willing to work, for what I work for, I probably am more effective where I am in the field I want to be in, which is counseling. And no matter what they call me, that's what I do. And I do a lot of paperwork too, but I really feel that I couldn't have my life be any more like I want it than it is.

Student Learning Materials

Barnett, Don and Sterling, Rick, eds. Bobbi Lee: Indian rebel. Richmond, B.C.: LSM Press, 1975. 118 pp. Paper. $1.95. Order from LSM Information Center, P.O. Box 94338, B.C., Canada V64 2A8.

"This is the personal account of the first twenty years in the life of a Canadian Indian woman. For those who wish to better understand what it is like to be Indian in North America, or why millions of Indians, Blacks and Chicanos wind up in dead-end lives, drunk in alleyways or strung out on 'junk' in big city ghettos, or why political organizations aiming for national liberation and socialism are rising up among these internally colonized peoples, this story is a revealing document." (From the introduction.) There is strong language in Bobbi Lee's account and many details of her life are harsh; teachers should use their judgment about the appropriateness of assigning this in their particular school.

Davis, Margaret, ed. Life as we have known it, by co-operative women. New York: Norton, 1975. 141 pp. Paper. $2.95.

This book is a first hand record of working class women's experiences in early twentieth-century England. Some of the entries are "Memories of seventy years," by Mrs. Layton (55 pages); "A plate-layer's wife," by Mrs. Wrigley (11 pages); "In a mining village," by Mrs. F.H. Smith (6 pages). The women write about growing up in poverty, going to work and becoming politically active in the Women's Co-operative Guild movement.

Gluck, Sherna, ed. From parlor to prison: five American suffragists talk about their lives. New York: Vintage Books, 1976. 285 pp. Paper. $3.95.

This book is based on oral history interviews with five women who were involved in the women's suffrage movement in the early 20th century of the U.S. All the women are white, and each comes from a different perspective: a Greenwich Village radical, a Midwestern activist in the movement for birth control clinics, a politically committed newspaperwoman, a federal lobbyist, and an advertising executive and clubwoman. The chapters range from 30 to 65 pages in length.

Kahn, Kathy, ed. Hillbilly women. New York: Avon, 1972. 151 pp. Paper, $1.50.

"They live in the towns and hamlets of southern Appalachia. They are the women of the coal-mine camps and mill towns; they are members of a fiercely proud sisterhood. For in spite of enormous abuse from mine and mill operators, welfare agencies, corrupt union officials and their gun thugs, these women remain undaunted.

"Hillbilly Women tells their stories in their own words -- sometimes angry, sometimes tender, always compelling and direct." (Book jacket.) Photographs. Appendix lists grassroots organizations and publications in southern Appalachia with comments on them.

Linderman, Frank. Pretty-Shield: medicine woman of the Crows. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972. (Original title, Red Mother, 1932.) 256 pp. Paper. $2.45.

This is an oral history of an old Crow woman who told her story in Crow and by signs to Frank Linderman in 1932. The dialogue is direct and her account describes the life of this plains Indian tribe before the white man arrived in Montana, and the changes that occurred when the buffalo were killed off for their hides. Pretty Shield also explains Crow traditions and the role of women during her narrative.

Lurie, Nancy, ed. Mountain Wolf Woman, sister of Crashing Thunder: the autobiography of a Winnebago Indian. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1966. 142 pp. Paper. $2.25.

Mountain Wolf Woman is a Winnebago Indian who has told the story of her life to her adopted kinswoman, Nancy Lurie. She tells briefly of her girlhood and her family, describes her marriages, her children and her grandchildren.

We suggested a choice between either Appendix A or the main autobiography. Appendix A is a short version (8 pages) of her life story, told at one sitting. In the main body of the book (83 pages), Mountain Wolf Woman expands and adds events to her original autobiography.

Seifer, Nancy. Nobody speaks for me!: self-portraits of American working class women. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976. 477 pp. Hardcover. $10.95.

This book is a compilation of oral histories of 10 working class women, "self-portraits of leaders, activists, doers in their communities around the country, women who are challenging the tired conventional stereotypes... While their personal circumstances, jobs, neighborhoods, and ethnic backgrounds vary dramatically, each has struggled with concrete issues affecting her life and emerged a fighter... Their attitudes, life-styles, and growing awareness...reveal the enormous potential of American women to change their lives and their country." (Book jacket).

- "Rosalinda Rodriguez," pp. 298-343.
  Rosa Rodriguez describes her life from the time she was born in 1948 in Cotulla, Texas through her election to the City Council in 1972. Some of the external in-

fluences on her decisions are her Chicano culture, her mother, and her husband. Included in this chapter is a discussion by Rosa's husband, Roy, about the political party they belong to and his supportive view of her involvement in politics.

The entire chapter can be assigned, or excerpts can easily be selected.

Wigginton, Eliot, ed. Foxfire 3. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1975. 511 pp. Paper. $4.95.

Successor to Foxfires 1 and 2: "animal care, banjos and dulcimers, hide tanning...and still more affairs of plain living." (Book jacket.) Probably the best-known high school oral history project in America. Illustrations, photographs, people and subject indices.

- "Beulah Perry," pp. 398-415.

She describes her ancestors, her parents and growing up in the country, and talks about how the world has changed since she was a child.

Wigginton, Eliot, ed., I wish I could give my son a wild raccoon. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1976. 366 pp. Paper. $4.95.

This book is a collection of 40 narrative interviews done by students in communities throughout the country. It was created as a celebration of the Bicentennial; its goal was stated by Wigginton in the solicitation letter he sent to adults who worked with students on Foxfire-type projects. "This book...will be an opportunity for our grandparents to speak their piece from their own special perspective. A forum where men and women from every culture can come together to express, through their grandchildren, their hopes and fears for us as a nation, and their dreams for us as a world." (page 13)

Wilson, Gilbert L. "Waheenee: an Indian girl's story told by herself." North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains 38:1 and 2, Winter-Spring 1971. 188 pp. $2.50. Available from the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Liberty Memorial Building, Bismarck, N.D. 58501.

This oral history was published in 1921, and has been republished in its entirety by the North Dakota State Historical Society. Gilbert Wilson was a minister who talked with a woman of the Hidatsa (a Sioux tribe) named Waheenee-wea, or Buffalo-Bird Woman, in 1908, and put her stories into a book. One fascinating aspect of Waheenee's account is her description of a way of life that is long vanished: buffalo hunts, attacks from other tribes, the building and care of lodges, moving camp, and marriage customs. Waheenee also describes the different training and duties of women and men. Even as she speaks to Wilson in 1908, she says "I am an old woman now. The buffaloes and black-tail deer are gone and our Indian ways are almost gone. Sometimes I find it hard to believe that

I ever lived them."

The writing of this account is somewhat stilted, in the style of 1908, and therefore could be moderately difficult for some students. The book is divided into chapters (some are "A Little Indian Girl," "Kinship, Clan Cousins," "Marriage," "A Buffalo Hunt") that could be assigned alone.

Audiovisual: films

Foxfire. 1974. Color. 21 minutes. Available on 16mm film or videocassette. $35 rental from McGraw-Hill Films, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York 10020

"Foxfire takes you deep into the hills to explore the old ways of plain people... As the camera explores the techniques of recording oral history, writing, designing and running a magazine...the Foxfire staff and local residents explain their project." (McGraw-Hill promotional brochure.)

An old-fashioned woman. 1974. Martha Coolidge. Color. 49 minutes. $36 rental from University of California Extension Media Center, Berkeley, CA 94720

"Portrait of 87 year old Mabel Tilton Coolidge, filmed by her granddaughter Martha Coolidge. A self-assured woman, Mabel Coolidge graciously shares her memories of a contented upper-class New England life including college at Smith, marriage to a man who became Lt. Governor of Massachusetts, and motherhood. Although her own goals were predetermined, she appreciates how different and complex today's world has become and feels that young people face difficult choices. A member of the DAR, she embraces tradition, but is also open to change. The film can be used to stimulate discussion about roots, tradition and change." (Artel and Wengraf, Positive images, p. 79.)

Union Maids. Julia Reichert, James Klein, Miles Mogulescu. Black-and-white. 48 minutes. $55 rental (plus $5 handling) from New Day Films, P.O. Box 315, Franklin Lakes, N.J. 07417

"Three women in their 60's--Sylvia, Kate and Stella--tell the way things really were back in the days when people risked their jobs and lives to organize trade unions. They are the stars of Union Maids, a vivid slice of almost forgotten American history... What is especially moving is the way the film provides a quietly hopeful sense of our continuity with the past and future." (San Francisco Chronicle, quoted in New Day Films publicity brochure.)

PERSONAL LIVES

Introduction

In the Personal Lives unit, Sources of Strength concentrates on students' expectations for themselves--what they think their futures will be like--and on the power of society to influence their personal goals.

There are three sections to Personal Lives: Changing, Expectations and Looking Ahead. In Changing, students look back and describe what they were like when they were 9 or 10 years old. By doing this, they may begin to understand that many changes occur in their lives from year to year, and that these changes come about from events that were both in and out of their control.

In Expectations, the focus shifts to the lives of others. Through a film or books, students look at the differences between one woman's expectations for her life after high school and what actually happened in her life. They may begin to understand the possible effects of future personal and social events on a person's life, and of planning and not planning one's future.

Looking Ahead, the conclusion of the unit, combines students' personal projections of their futures with statistical information about marriage, family and work. This section is the culmination of a curriculum examining the ways in which women in a variety of cultures have had power, the cultural, historical and personal influences on their choices, and the degree to which they actually have been able to exercise control over their lives. Students will begin to answer the questions, "How much control do you have over your life?" and "How much control can anyone ever have over his or her life?"

If you have time to expand on this unit, activities on decision-making and/or values clarification would be very relevant additions. Books containing useful information and activities are annotated in the Personal Lives Teacher Background Materials section of the Bibliography. At the end of the Personal Lives unit, it might be appropriate for students to begin a career education course or consider job counseling.

Personal Lives touches on material that students may want to keep private. As they work with the ideas in the unit, some students will begin to examine their goals and values. We therefore suggest that students keep a daily or weekly journal of their responses during the unit. If students write down new ideas, this will help clarify them; the writing will also give students a record of their growth and of changes that occur in their thinking. It is especially interesting for students to look at a journal of this sort several years later to compare their ideas about the future with what they are actually doing.

Those students who don't like to write could limit themselves to short sentences, such as "I liked _____"; "I didn't like _______ or didn't agree with ________," or "I never thought about _________ before." The journals should be for their own private use or given to you voluntarily; perhaps extra credit could be given to those students who can demonstrate to you that they have kept a record.

Activities

Changing

The objectives for this section are for students to:

(1) recognize that changes in goals and preferences may occur over time in a person's life, and;

(2) identify factors that can influence those changes, both factors over which a person does have control and those over which a person does not have control.

1. Ask students to write a description of themselves when they were about 10 years old. Have them include these details in their description.

   - What they looked like
   - Where they lived
   - Who they lived with (adults, brothers, sisters)
   - What school they went to and if they liked it
   - What their favorite activity was
   - Who their best friends were
   - The most exciting thing that happened to them at that time
   - Whether they had pets and what kind

2. Have students choose a partner they feel comfortable with and read their writings to one another. Ask them to listen for the ways in which their descriptions are similar to and different from one another's.

3. Ask students to think and then write:

   - When you were 10, did you think about what you'd be like when you were in high school?
   - What did you expect to look like, to be doing, where and with whom did you expect to be living?
   - Are you different from or the same as what you thought you'd be?

4. Have students choose one factor about their lives that is different from what they expected, and identify in writing what influenced that change.

The writing task can be presented in this way:

> You may not have been aware at the time how your expectations or goals changed. Thinking about it now, what do you think influenced you to change? For example, you may have expected to have the same friends now as you did then, but if your family moved to another state, the move probably changed how your expectations turned out. Or you may have expected to be studying English but are now in a physical sciences program. This might have happened because you got attention from a science teacher and realized you liked science more than English.

If there are students who say everything in their lives is as they expected, ask them to pick one factor and think about how they achieved their expectation. Can they identify an event or person that influenced them to act to get what they wanted?

Some people or events that may have influenced students to change from what they expected are:

Major people in life
- influence of a parent, grandparent, older sibling
- influence of a teacher or other adult

Strong emotional events
- parents divorcing
- death or illness of person close to them
- person close to them moving away

Exposure to new experiences
- reading a book, seeing a film or tv program that made a strong impression
- learning a new skill
- visiting another state or country

Geographical relocation
- moving to a new neighborhood, state, country
- changing schools
- moving in with a different family member

Financial circumstances
- parents losing or gaining a lot of money
- students earning money doing a particular job

National and world events
- leaving a country because of revolution
- suffering losses because of an economic depression

Political movements
- reading literature from the feminist movement, La Raza, etc.
- meeting someone involved in a political movement

5. Ask students: How much control did you have over the event, person, feeling, etc. that made your expectation turn out differently? For example, how much control did you have over your family moving to another state? What control did you have over keeping in contact (writing letters, telephoning, visiting) with your old friends after you moved?

Expectations

The objectives for this section are for students to:

(1) distinguish between their expectations for themselves and others' expectations for them;

(2) recognize the effects of planning and lack of planning on a person's future.

1. Assign a film or a book excerpt in which adults reflect on their lives 5-10 years after leaving high school. Their reflections should encompass plans that were carried out as well as goals that were not reached, so that students can compare both planned and unplanned aspects of life. Help students to recognize that both society and individuals have influenced what happened in the lives of the people in the film or book.

   Select readings or film from the Student Learning Materials annotated at the end of this unit (pp.699-701).

2. If you show a film, ask students to write their immediate response to it after they see it. This writing will maintain the privacy of their response and will also help them to think about the film in concrete terms.

3. After students have seen the film or read a book or excerpt, have them fill in as a class the chart on page 693.

4. When the chart is filled in, ask students to do some evaluation. Ask them:

   A. As you look at the expectations listed in column 1 of the chart and reflect back on the film or book, can you tell which expectations were influenced or controlled by someone or something besides the woman herself (e.g., her father wanted her to go to college, her cultural background dictated marriage and children, etc.). Mark "Self" or "Other" next to each listing in column 1. (Note: The sources of some expectations may not be evident in the readings.)

   B. In column 3 of the chart (person or event that controlled or influenced what actually happened), which items, if any, of those you listed were unforeseen personal or social obstacles or opportunities. An unforeseen event could be one that you mistakenly did not consider as a possibility when making plans for the future or it could be an event that no amount of planning could foretell. Put a mark next to each event you think was "unforeseen."

C. On the basis of all the information you have gathered on this woman, evaluate the degree of control you think she has over her life. Consider how much she was influenced in her decisions by others, how often unplanned events affected her goals, and whether she was happy with her life. Ask students to give reasons for their responses.

5. After students have examined the expectations and actions of a woman in the film or book and the persons or events that influenced her, give them the following assignment in which they look at their own lives. Have them write their responses to these questions in class or as homework:

   - What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?
   - What does your family (or mother or father) expect you to do?
   - What do your best friends expect you to do?
   - What do your teachers or principal expect you to do?
   - What do you think is generally expected by this society of someone your age?

6. After they have done this writing about expectations, have students again choose a partner with whom to discuss their writing. They should consider the following:

> Is the goal you have for yourself different from what you think others expect you to do? If so, what are those differences? How will you resolve the difference between your goals and what they want for you?

Looking Ahead

So far in this unit students have looked back to when they were 9 or 10 years old, and have described how their goals and preferences have changed over time. They have also evaluated the amount of control persons in a film or book have exercised over their lives. The objectives for this section are for students to:

EXPECTATIONS CHART

Name of woman	1. Her expectations for her life after high school	2. What actually happened in her life	3. Person or event that controlled or influenced what actually happened

(1) project what their lives will be like in 5 years, and

(2) analyze their projections to determine how much control they have over their lives.

1. Ask students to write a description of what their lives will be like in 5 years. Have them answer these questions in their descriptions:
   - What will you look like?
   - Where will you live? Will you settle in one place or move a lot?
   - Will you live alone or with someone?
   - Will you have children?
   - What are the main activities you will do?
   - How much of your time will be spent in leisure?
   - How much of your time will be spent in work?
   - What will your work be? What responsibilities will be involved?
   - Will your work be paid or unpaid?
   - How much money will you have?
   - Will you travel? For fun? For work?
2. Have students read their descriptions to a partner and talk with each other about the parts of their descriptions that strike them most strongly. Have them discuss what obstacles, opportunities and unforeseen personal and social events might occur to change parts of their projected lives.
3. Then have students write down the three parts of their projections they think will be most important to their happiness.
4. Hand out the statistics on the next page, or read them to the class, and ask students what their initial response is to hearing them. What surprises them on the list? What did they already know? Did they take any of these facts into consideration in their future projections? If not, which statistics do they think might apply to them? This discussion could be held with the whole group, or in small groups.

STATISTICS*

Marriage and Family

Nine out of ten girls will marry.

Eight out of ten girls will have children.

More than 1 in 10 women will be widowed before they are 50.

The number of divorces granted in California between 1960 and 1970 increased by 148%.

Spousal support is awarded in only 10% of divorces.

Nearly 25% of all children in the U.S. were living in single-parent families in 1970.

The average life expectancy of women today is 75 years.

The average mother of today has 40 years of life ahead of her after her youngest child enters school.

Work

Only 1 in 3 California girls plans to go to college.

Fully employed women high school graduates (with no college) have less income on the average than fully employed men who have not completed elementary school.

The unemployment rate for white teenage boys in 1973 was 12.3%.

The unemployment rate for white teenage girls in 1973 was 13%.

The unemployment rate for minority teenage boys in 1973 was 26.9%.

The unemployment rate for minority teenage girls in 1973 was 34.5%.

The unemployment rate for whites in 1975 was 7.9%.

The unemployment rate for Blacks in 1975 was 13%.

Nine out of ten women will be employed outside the home for 25 years or more.

At least 6 out of 10 women will work full time outside their homes for up to 30 years.

Sixty percent of working women are married.

Women earn 58¢ for every $1 earned by male workers in the U.S.

Three out of four clerical workers are women.

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*Statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor, 1974; and State of California Advisory Commission on the Status of Women, 1968.

5. Have students revise their projections, if they want to, to include any relevant factors in the list of statistics. For example, if the student is an Asian female who plans to get a job after graduating from high school, the unemployment rate for minority teenage girls is relevant to her projection.

6. Have students divide into small groups and discuss what they would do if someone told them they couldn't have or do the most important thing to them in their projection. Here are some examples you could use in presenting this task:

   - For example, if your most important goal was to marry and you didn't meet anyone, what would you do? Would you persist with the goal using the same strategies, change the approach, move another of your goals to the top position on your list, give up the goal completely?

   - Or, if you prepared for a certain profession but then couldn't find a job because of the job market, what would you do? Would you take a job for less money and prestige than you should have with your training? Would you continue to look for a job in your profession? Would you go back to school for new training to prepare for jobs that were available?

   - If you decided to live in a certain geographic location but a job opportunity occurred somewhere else, what would you do? Give up your goal to live where you wanted and take the job? Turn down the job and keep looking for work where you want to live? Use different strategies in seeking work?

   Answering these kinds of questions should put students in touch with their ability to take control of their lives, help them see the necessity for doing as much planning as possible to reach their goals, and help them understand that often it is necessary to generate creative alternatives.

7. By now students are ready to consider the question of control in relation to their own lives. Ask each student to decide individually how much personal control s/he thinks it is possible to have, given the evidence s/he has seen of the effects of societal and familial influences and unforeseen events on life directions.

   More specifically, ask each student to decide how much control s/he could exercise over the three parts of the projection which were identified as being most important to his/her happiness.

8. Lead a discussion with the class in which you ask students to come to a general conclusion about the amount of control it's

possible for any woman or man to have. Ask how students might plan differently for their futures now that they've done this unit and this curriculum.

We hope that students will see that although it is not possible or even desirable to be in total control of one's life or plan completely for the future, it is highly satisfying to take an active role in planning the direction and development of one's potential and strength.

PERSONAL LIVES

Student Learning Materials

Belden, Jack. "Gold Flower's Story," in China shakes the world. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970. 524 pp. Paper. $4.95.

In "Gold Flower's Story" (pp. 275-307), Gold Flower describes to Jack Belden the early years of her life, her romantic love for the youthful Lipao, her arranged marriage to an old man and attempt to commit suicide rather than go through with the marriage. When the 8th Route Army comes to her village, she joins the Women's Association and speaks about her mistreatment by her husband and father-in-law.

Chisholm, Shirley. Unbought and unbossed. New York: Avon Books, 1970. 191 pp. Paper. $0.95.

The autobiography of the first Black Congresswoman. The chapters "Back to Brooklyn," "College years," and "Starting in business" (pp. 23-55) show Chisholm as a young woman helping Blacks and women organize politically. They also show important decisions she made at this crucial time in her life.

Giovanni, Nikki. Gemini. New York: Viking Compass, 1973. 149 pp. Paper. $1.95.

- "On being asked what it's like to be Black" (pp. 24-33). Nikki Giovanni, a 25 year old writer and poet, talks about her grandparents' and parents' effect on her life. She also discusses power in relationship to Black people. A humorous touch.

Gluck, Sherna, ed. From parlor to prison: five American suffragists talk about their lives. New York: Vintage Books, 1976. 285 pp. Paper. $3.95.

This book is based on oral history interviews with five women who were involved in the women's suffrage movement in the early 20th century of the U.S. All the women are white, and each comes from a different perspective: a Greenwich Village radical, a Midwestern activist in the movement for birth control clinics, a politically committed newspaperwoman, a federal lobbyist, and an advertising executive and clubwoman. The chapters range from 30 to 65 pages in length.

Katz, Naomi and Milton, Nancy, eds. Fragment from a lost diary and other stories: women of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975. 317 pp. Paper. $3.95.

Anthology of Third World literature about women: 20 stories by men as well as women. Introduction briefly comments on each and its place in the book's three sections.

- Nicol, Abioseh. "The truly married woman" (pp. 107-177). After living with Ajayi for 12 years, Ayo changes her status from mistress to wife and demands more respect from Ajayi.

Nwapa, Flora. Efuru. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1966. 281 pp. Paper. $2.75.

Chapter 1 (pp. 1-17) introduces Efuru and tells of her marriage, against her father's wishes, to Adizua, her first husband. The dowry customs, Efuru's trading work, and her "bath" (clitoridectomy) and subsequent "feasting" (fattening) are described.

Chapter 2 (pp. 18-38) describes the married couple's trading ventures, how Efuru uses the services of a dibia (medicine man) to help her get pregnant, and finally, the birth of her child.

In future chapters Efuru's baby dies and she cannot conceive again. All her problems seem to stem from her lack of fertility.

Seifer, Nancy. Nobody speaks for me! self-portraits of American working class women. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976. 477 pp. Hardcover. $10.95.

This book is a compilation of oral histories of 10 working class women, "self-portraits of leaders, activists, doers in their communities around the country, women who are challenging the tired conventional stereotypes... While their personal circumstances, jobs, neighborhoods, and ethnic backgrounds vary dramatically, each has struggled with concrete issues affecting her life and emerged as a fighter... Their attitudes, life-styles, and growing awareness...reveal the enormous potential of American women to change their lives and their country." (book jacket)

- "Dorothy Bolden" (pp. 136-177).
  In the first section of this oral history, Dorothy Bolden, head of the Domestic Workers Union, describes her years as a domestic worker in Atlanta. Despite this labor, she was actively involved in her six children's education. When the civil rights movement hit Atlanta, Dorothy's natural organizing skills found a new outlet. Later she organized the maids of Atlanta with such success that a combination of government support and organizations like the Urban League have kept her going ever since.
- "Rosalinda Rodriguez" (pp. 298-343).
  Rosa Rodriguez describes her life from the time she was born in 1948 in Cotulla, Texas through her election to the City Council in 1972. Some of the external influences on her decisions are her Chicano culture, her mother, and her husband. Included in this chapter is a discussion by Rosa's husband, Roy, about the political party they belong to and his supportive view of her involvement in politics.

Wong, Jade Snow. Fifth Chinese daughter. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950. 246 pp. Hardcover. $8.75.

The story of the fifth daughter of the Wong family, who came to San Francisco in the early 1920's. A very moving account of the struggles and triumphs of a young woman torn between Chinese traditions and American values.

Audiovisual: Film

Sylvia, Fran, and Joy. 25 minutes, black and white, 1973. Extension Media Center, University of California, Berkeley, $15 rental; Churchill Films, Los Angeles, $185 sale.

> "In this documentary three young women, representing divergent lifestyles, express their thoughts and feelings about the roles of housekeeper, wife and mother. Sylvia shares domestic and wage-earning responsibilities with her husband. After divorce, Fran is struggling to find an identity and meaningful life by herself. Joy is satisfied with the traditional role of housewife-mother. Sylvia's husband, who prefers cooking and child care to work outside the home, presents an alternative to traditional roles for men." (Reviewed in Positive Images, by Wengraf and Artel.)
>
> Sylvia, Fran, and Joy are all young middle-class white women who look very similar. It is this similarity in appearance which makes their differences in lifestyle and outlook particularly striking.